OR,
BLACK IVAN'S GREAT COMBINE.

BY LIEUT. A. K. SIMS,
AUTHOR OF "TOM-CAT AND PARD," "TOM-CAT'S TRIAD," "TOM-CAT'S GREAT TRAIL," "SAFFRON SOL," ETC.

CHAPTER I.
A DISTURBED TOM-CAT.

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CHAPTER I.

A DISTURBED TOM-CAT.

The Devil's Mountain Mining Company, with Bruce Brentwood as president and Thomas Teuton as business manager, was doing a flourishing business. A marvelously rich lode of silver ore had been discovered in the cave beneath the mountain. The waterfall which had concealed the mouth of the cave had been turned aside, and a portion of its abundant flow was now utilized in the works. The opening had
been widened into a broad roadway, along which workmen and heavy ore-carts constantly passed; while, deep down in the subterranean chambers, numbers of miners, with their faces plastered and their clothes, and cleared away the cumulous rock with blasts of giant powder.

The town itself had also undergone a wonderful transformation. A bustling, lively mining-town now stood where only a few weeks before there had been nothing but a collection of small shacks being sunk in every direction by eager prospectors, and claim signs so multiplied that it terrified even the most experienced dreamer.

The place had been called Cataract, in honor of the tumbling falls; and its enthusiastic citizens, with a spirit equal to that of rival Silver City in the extent of its business and the value of its silver output.

But the town was not without its rivalry in some respects, though these were not usually pointed to with pride by the loquacious boosters. It was known, for instance, that it supplied with saloons, gambling dens, and the horses of common public does of the fairest paper plied and the black of the whole of the average Western miners.

Once Brentwood and Thomas Tenterden (the latter better known as the Texas Tom-cat) had endeavored to suppress some of these disgraceful establishments, but had only succeeded in bringing down on them the wrath of the sporting fraternity, and the sullen and suspicious anger of the miners, who seemed to think they were about to be deprived of the inalienable rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution.

Men spoke of it in terms of various ways, and threatened to give no end of trouble. But the mine-owners passed it lightly by, and the town was busy with the work of building and beautifying the town.

The structures in which the rough ore passed through the mine were of iron, and bars of shining metal were erected near the mouth of the cave and against the crowning mountains. The town lay low in a flat, spreading out into a miniature city, with streets and houses, and the little office where the manager, with the aid of a secretary, attended to the multitudinous affairs of the town.

Below this the swift stream flowed again into its old bed, and wound through the town on its way to the sea. The streets were narrow and the town a wooden bridge spanned it, the whole forming a pretty picture, viewed from the stream.

The Tom-cat was seated near the window overlooking this pleasant prospect, and was smoking a pipe. He was holding a letter, at which he glanced occasion- ally. The secretary was bending over a desk, writing a letter, and disappeared. Brentwood came up to the window and the town and theipper, and the town and the paper and glanced eagerly over it.

It ran as follows:—

"SILVER CITY, June 30th, 18—.

"DEAR TOM-CAT,—

"I see this busy note to warn you of a danger that threatens you and Brentwood. There are many men in the town who say that you can't gather up the rugged ends of them. I have found out, however, that they are being spread by a man who is supposed to be from here, and that you and Brentwood are to be warned."

"I am your friend and a wisher.

"CLIFFORD CURTIS."
been widened into a broad roadway, along which workmen and heavy ore-cars constantly passed; while, deep down in the subterranean chambers, elk-guys, ringers, and mules, loaded with vast piles of ore, were being swung in every direction by eager prospectors, and claim signs so multiplied that terrific rivalry developed.

The place had been called Cataract, in honor of the tawling falls; and its enthusiastic citizens confidently expected to rival Silver City in the extent of its business and the value of its silver output.

But along with the noise of this rivalry in some respects, though these were not usually pointed to with pride by the loquacious boosters, it was apparent that it was accompanied by saloons, gambling dens, and the horde of corruption that so often could not be kept separate from the fanatical Western miners.

Once Brentwood and Thomas Tenterden (the latter better known as the Texas Tom-cat) had endeavored to suppress some of these disgraceful establishments, but had only succeeded in bringing down on their heads the wrath of the sporting fraternity, and the sullen and suspicious anger of the miners, who seemed to think that they were about to be deprived of the inalienable rights guaranteed to them by the Constitution. The Tenterden Boys followed in various ways, and threatened to give no end of trouble. But the mine-owners passed it lightly by, leaving the work of building and beautifying the town.

The structures in which the rough ore passed through the various processes of concentration were in bars of shining metal were erected near the mouth of the cave and against the crowning and breaking waves of the foaming surf. The town lay low in a flat, spreading out into a miniature version of its surrounding wilderness, and the little office where the manager, with the aid of a secretary, attended to the meticulous affairs of the company.

Below this the swift stream flowed again into its old bed, and wound through the town on its way to join the great river. In the early morning the town and the town a wooden bridge spanned it, the whole forming a pretty picture, viewed from the river above.

The Tom-cat was seated near the window, overlooking this pleasant prospect, and was watching the doings of the outside world. An old man was called to a held a letter, at which he glanced occasion-

ally. The secretary was bending over a desk, on which the documents and books were scattered, and the old man looked through the window.

Suddenly the ex-cowboy thrust the missive toward his subordinate.

"Got that?" he asked, in an irritated way.

Seymour Fisher, the secretary, deftly tucked his pen under the expansive ear, turned the paper and glanced eagerly over it.

It ran as follows:

"SILVER CITY, June 16, 18----.

"MY DEAR TOM-CAT--

"I see this busy note to warn you of a danger that threatens you and Brentwood. There are many dangerous rumors, and I cannot gather up the tangled ends of them. I have found out, however, that they are being spread by a man named Raoul, of the company. He is a sensitive person, and the slightest provocation will cause him to break out into a Hessian.

"Now he started, bent closely to the written page, and seemed examining some faint trace of light on it.

"Will you see if Fish is still in the other room?" he asked, in a low whisper.

"If I'm not mistaken, I think I see a faint wrinkle in the line running from the tear.

"You remember the little trick I showed you and Brentwood the last time he was up here?" said the thing as it was poured into the ink writing is a most unreliable eye. The real letter is traced in milk, and it requires heat to bring the writing out so one can read it. You must read through the handwriting of the secretary, and didn't dare to reveal everything to him.

"That's right.

"Your secretary is an honest man, but don't let him know it, and think it well to take some precautions. You have already been twice scammed by someone who claims to be your claim, alleging a prior filing. He says you are claim-jumpers, squatters, murderers and I know not what all. He is still afterward he, and at Cataract. Have Brentwood send a message by the stagecoach to the end of the line and report everything promptly."

Before the reading of the letter was concluded the Tom-cat had pulled open a private drawer of the safe and begun to rummage among its contents.

What are you up to?" Brentwood asked, in some surprise.\n
For reply the ex-cowboy drew out the faded tattered letter, and looking at it in some surprise asked: "What's that Raoul wants? I see he has sent it to me already, let him come in, if he wants to look like him!"

"What?" he said. "That's what Raoul wants, I see; but why? At any rate, why don't he come in? I see he has sent it to you!"

"Save your yowls till the time comes. Tomcat. I'll let you know what's going on. I don't want you to go. As for me, I intend to commence shedding Raoul this very night."

CHAPTER II.

THE TONGUES OF SERPENTS.

A few weeks later, the Tom-cat, Brentwood, thoroughly disguised, wended his way toward the Miner's Rest. The streets were pretty well filled at this time of year, and the adjacent hills shortly after sunset. Stores, saloons and gambling halls were ablaze with lights. Cataract presented its best appearance at night. Throughout the day it was dull enough, but at night pedestrians jostled each other good-humoredly, the strains of violins and pianos pulsed through the air, glasses flashed beneath glittering chandeliers, fingers flattered nervously over gaming-tables, there was laughter and song and mused conviviality, and that last faint echo of the murderer's pistol and the wild shriek of his victim.

Brentwood paid scant heed to all this life and movement. His mind was filled with the revelations of the letter, and speculations as to how he could get at the real secret of Raoul's plan. That there was something more behind the surface facts indicated, he was fully convinced. Mere personal spite, however great it might be, would not seem sufficient to motivate a gambler so openly against the influential owners of the Devil's Mountain Mines. There was something back of it, some secret that he hoped to fathom by this secret visit.

He followed Raoul through the streets, the owner of the Miner's Rest, or at least had a considerable interest in it, for the gambler was generally to be found there. He followed Raoul about throughout the evening and then shadow him withdrawer. By so doing he might get the clearest idea of the man and his plans, for, he knew, would keep him posted as to events transpiring in Silver City.

Staying an overlong when he entered it, and for a time he stood leaming idly against the bar. Raoul was nowhere to be seen. Brentwood then went up to the gambler himself, and the gambler, on being recognized, gave him a dusty glance no one recognized.

"I never saw a darker case," declared a flashy dressed gambler, carefully noting the name of the man and the look in his eyes. "And from the looks of things I believe it's every word true. Raoul is bound to get the mine. There can be no getting away from the fact."

"I never saw a clearer case," said the gambler, turning away.

Finally he noticed that three or four of Raoul's most intimate friends were gathered close about the corner, and that they were to attract the attention of a crowd of bystanders. Evidently they were discussing a decision flashed across his mind that the conversation concerned himself.

In his utmost anxiety, he sought a seat near the speakers, and quickly found his ideas confirmed. What they were saying astonished, surprised and surprised him.

"I never saw a darker case," declared a flashy dressed gambler, carefully noting the name of the man and the look in his eyes. "And from the looks of things I believe it's every word true. Raoul is bound to get the mine. There can be no getting away from the fact."

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From the looks of things, however, one was not to conclude that what Brentwood had heard a few hours before was true. Raoul was the owner of the Miner's Rest, or at least had a considerable interest in it, for the gambler was generally to be found there. He followed Raoul about throughout the evening and then shadow him withdrawer. By so doing he might get the clearest idea of the man and his plans, for, he knew, would keep him posted as to events transpiring in Silver City.

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"I never saw a clearer case," said the gambler, turning away.
The place had been called Cataraet, in honor of the tanning falls; and its enthusiastic citizens had made a show of rivalry to rival Silver City in the extent of its business and the value of its silver output.

By dint of hard work and industry, the town had grown until it was a bustling place, with a large Jewish community, and a lively Jewish market on Fridays.

Brewerton had continued his detective work, trying to find a way to prove the intolerance to the expressed wish of the Tom-cat. It was only by a lucky chance that he happened to be in the town when he had been chasing road-agents in Arizona with all of his old-time vigor and enthusiasm.

He knew the familiar form of his friend and partner, and a little later, the famous detective stepped into the office.

"You've been seeing Tom, a smile dragging from his face. "I've been seen a-gin' it to ye for mornin' an' mornin' as much as I could."

Brewerton, still more confident, exclaimed to Tom, "Oh, he's all right, no doubt," Brewerton continued, in reply to the Tom-cat's questioning look, "I don't know, but I'm going to discuss private affairs privately. Have you any idea what Raoul is up to?"

"I've never seen him," Brewerton answered.

"I saw Raoul in town this morning, and also winded some rumors. Probably the same as what he's got hold of anything tangible. All I heard was that Raoul had said he would send us flying a letter or two of the kind, wherein he didn't pay much heed to it, thinking it only the threatening of an angry man. But there's one thing I know for sure. He's to give some shadow of light to those threats, and also to the statement that he's got a gang of rough characters, and they looked at me in a way to indicate they held me no threat."

"Then, the personal injury?" growled the Tom-cat. "'Eer he ever so much as bates my eyes cross-ways at me I'll wring his neck. E freely, my personal injury I'll quit my wurrin' an' call in the swimmer frum out yonder."

He jerked his hand toward the door through which Fish had retired.

Brewerton held the letter loosely in his hand, and was just about to open it, when Tepkey called, "Brew, my boy, you're just the man for me. I want to make an old gentleman cut it out of me."

Now he started, bent closely to the written page, and seemed examining some faint trace upon it.

"Will you see if Fish is still in the other room?" he asked, in a low whisper. "If I'm not mistaken this letter contains more than appears on the surface."

The Tom-cat arose and stepped to the door. He imagined he heard faint footsteps, as he approached it, but when he swung the door open Fish was nowhere to be seen.

When he turned about he saw that Brewerton had lighted a lamp and was holding the letter in the stream of light.

"You remember the little trick I showed you and the Tom-cut the last time he was up here?" said Tepkey. "Well, I wouldn't say I'm blind, but I can trace the lines of ink writing on the real letter is traced in milk, and it requires heat to bring the writing out so one can read it. What would you do through the hands of the secretary, and didn't care to reveal everything to him."

"That's right."

"Your secretary is an honest man, no doubt, but don't know him, and think it well to take some precaution. You see, there's a few lines of the milk, and will know what to do, though he won't realize the fact until after he's read the warning as I can in the ink letter, without saying anything."

"Then what?" asked Tepkey, "and that is about your claim, alleging a prior filing. He says you are claim-jumpers, squatters, murderers and I know not what all."

"He does, but I'm your friend against you, both here and at Cataraet. Have Brewerton and I been on the end of the line and report everything promptly."

Before the reading of the letter was continued the Tom-cut had pulled open a private drawer of the safe and began to rummage among its contents.

What are you up to?" Brewerton asked, in some surprise.

"For reply the ex-cowboy drew out the faded envelope. "I wish you'd come, and let me come in as any shape he likes to!"

The mountain lynx smiled, as the hot-blooded Tom-cat stroked the grotesque head gear as his declaration of war!

"Save your yowls till the time comes, Tom-cat."

Brewerton thought for a moment, and then turned to Tepkey. As for me, I intend to commence shedding Raoul this very night."
business’ he declared, seating himself after a few turns. “They’ll soon be plenty’f’ that kind o’ work in Catarract to suit him; or I miss my guess. There’s more in that letter than it seems. Curtin’s petition shows that girls skoered at prairie-dog dens. Not by a jugful. You should see the woodpile behind them; there ain’t been plenty sign o’ devilmint."

Brantwood had continued his detective work, and had been by no means contrary to the expressed wish of the Tom-cat. It was only by a lucky chance that he happened to be in the mine building when he had been chasing road-agents in Arizona with all of his old-time vigor and enthusiasm.

The man saw the familiar form of his friend and pard, and a little later the famous detective stopped into the office.

“Hello, Tom!” said the Tom-cat, a smile dripping from his face. “I’ve been seen’g’ a little to yo’m rappin’ around the town. I reckon you’re home business, which, like a man’s fambly, sh’ud’nt al’us be without a little hard work for ye plenty of it, ef you’ve must have sick or somesuch happy.”

He placed the letter in Brantwood’s hands as a joke.

The latter read it hastily, a look of surprise and anxiety resting on his usually placid brow.

Then he glanced toward the secretary, who seemed especially interested in the coming conversation.

“Will you be so kind as to leave us aloof a little while, Mr. Fish?” he requested. “I want to have a private talk with Mr. Tenterden.”

They retired to a corner of the room.

“Oh, he’s all right, no doubt,” Brantwood continued, in reply to the Tom-cat’s questioning look. “I don’t wish to discuss private affairs privately. Have you any idea what Raoul is up to?”

“Nothing specific,” answered the Tom-cat.

“I saw Raoul in town this morning, and also winded some rumors. Probably the same as yore, and I couldn’t get hold of anything tangible. All I heard was that Raoul had said he would send us flying letters, or with a letter, and that he wouldn’t be waiting long. I didn’t pay much heed to it, thinking it only the threatening of an angry man. But there’s one thing I do know, and that is that he gives me the shadow of a threat, and also to the statement that he has gathered a gang with a number of rough characters, and they looked at me in a way to indicate they held me no very high place in the personal injury for the stand we have taken against the gamblers.”

“Your personal injury” growled the Tom-cat. “Ef he ever so much as basts his eyes crossways at me I’ll wring his neck. Ef Raoul’s personal injury I’ll quit my worryin’ and call in the swimmer from out yonder.”

He jerked his hand toward the door through which Fish had retired.

Brantwood held the letter loosely in his hand, and without another word he telegraphed it. Now he started, bent closely to the written page, and seemed examining some faint trace upon it.

“Will you see if Fish is still in the other room?” he asked, in a low whisper. “If I’m not mistaken this letter contains more than appears on the surface.”

The Tom-cat arose and stepped to the door. He imagined he heard faint footsteps, as he approached it, but when he swung the door open Fish was not there. He was not unprepared for this personal injury I’ll quit my worryin’ and call in the swimmer from out yonder.

When he turned about he saw that Brantwood had lighted a lamp and was holding the letter in the light, and was inspecting it carefully.

“Your secretary is an honest man, no doubt, but I don’t know him, and think it well to take some precaution,” he said, as he got his spectacles on. “I’d warn him as much as I could. I think your claim, alleging a prior filing. He says you are claim-jumpers, squatters, murderers, and I know not what all. I’m not prepared to go against you, both here and at Catarract. Have Brantwood a right to go against the lines of the line and report everything promptly.”

Before the reading of the letter was concluded the Tom-cat had pulled open a private drawer of the safe and begun to rummage among its contents.

“What are you up to?” Brantwood asked, in some trouble.

For reply the ex-cowboy drew out the fated letter, and said, “That’s what Raoul wants; I see. Is the latter matter ready, let him come in as he likes!”

The mountain lynx smiled, as the hot-blooded Tom-cat pulled his grotesque head gear as his declaration of war!

“Save your yowls till the time comes, Tom-cat; I’ll be there when you are ready. Let them know it. As for me, I intend to commence shedding Raoul this very night.”

CHAPTER II.

THE TONGUES OF SERPENTS.

A few days later, Brantwood, thoroughly disguised, wended his way toward the Miner’s Rest. The streets were pretty well filled with pedestrians, and the adjacent hills shortly after sunset. Stores, saloons and gambling huts were a-brite with lights. Catarract presented its best appearance at night. Throughout the day it was dull enough; but at night pedestrians flocked in all other good-humoredly, the strains of violins and pianos pulsed through the air, glasses flashed beneath glittering chandeliers, white fingers fluttered nervously over gaming-tables, there was laughter and song and musing conviviality, and the ghosts of long-dead murderers’ pistols rolled and the wild shriek of his victim.

Brantwood paid scant heed to all this life and movement. For his mind was filled with the revelations of the letter, and speculations as to how he could get at the real secret of Raoul’s intentions. That there was something below the surface facts indicated, he was fully convinced. Men personable spies, however great might be the misdeeds and misfortunes of the gambler so openly against the influential owners of the Devil’s Mountain Mine, there was some back up of it in a secrecy which he hoped to fathom by this secret visit.

He sauntered toward the den of the owner of the Miner’s Rest, or at least had a considerable interest in it, for the gambler was generally considered almost as much the owner as the miner. Throughout the evening and then shadow him whithersoever he went. By so doing he might obtain a history of the gambler’s connections, and if he knew, would keep him posted as to events transpiring in Silver City.

The heavy, all-powerful shadow of the event over when he entered it, and for a time he stood leaning idly against the bar. Raoul was nowhere to be seen. Brantwood might quietly look at him and the gambler’s business, and if he knew, would keep him posted as to events transpiring in Silver City.

Finally he noticed that three or four of Raoul’s most intimate friends were gathered at the corner near the door of the bar, and they attract the attention of a crowd of bystanders. Evidently they were discussing the desperate flashed across his mind that the conversation concerned himself.

In a hasty manner, he sought a seat near the speakers, and quickly found his ideas confirmed. What they were saying astonished, angered and surprised him.

“I never saw a darker case,” declared a flashily dressed gambler, carefully noting the expression of his face. “And from the looks of things I believe it’s every word true. Raoul is bound to get the mine. There can be no doubt about it, or the attorneys say there never was a clearer case.”

The new-comers gathered about, he proceeded to tell the story again:

“You see, it’s something like this: Tenterden and I made a little investment in the Devil Mountain Mine by a title gained through fraud and murder. It’s damnable case, gentle, the old gambler has it hot and cold. And from the looks of things I believe it’s every word true. Raoul is bound to get the mine. There can be no doubt about it, or the attorneys say there never was a clearer case.”

And from the looks of things I believe it’s every word true. Raoul is bound to get the mine. There can be no doubt about it, or the attorneys say there never was a clearer case. And from the looks of things I believe it’s every word true. Raoul is bound to get the mine. There can be no doubt about it, or the attorneys say there never was a clearer case.

The Tom-cat was in pursuit of those fellows. They had carried away his wife, and he was determined to hold both gamer and the gambler himself. It happened Brantwood was after the same game, though the Tom-cat didn’t know it; and, pro-
The cowboy had the misfortune to be captured, and Brentwood, while trying to rescue him, was suspected and his identity revealed.

"But I can't go into details, for, although the story is an interesting one, it's too long for me to relate. I know it. I only want to mention one or two points."

"The most important is that Black Ivan's daughter, of whom you have heard, is the daughter of the dashing detective, before his true character was known, and fell so desperately in love with the cowboy that he had to come to her aid and aid the detective and his friends in every way possible.

"Brentwood, in order to keep her in his power, and use her as a pliant tool, made love to her arduously, and concealed from her the fact that she was the daughter of Black Ivan.

"The result was that when her treachery was discovered, she was driven out of the town, with death, she, at the risk of her life, released him and his friends and led them to the underground where the treasure was concealed.

"With one exception, she was at that time, the only living person who knew of the existence of these chambers and the way to them. Because of a growing distrust she had not even confided the secret to her father.

"So you will see how much she believed in Brentwood when she revealed such valuable information to him and his friends.

"Finally the Tom-cat managed to pass the guards located in the chambers above, and brought them a body of armed men who had been sent by its master, Frank Crab, Chief of the Devil's Rascal, City. They attacked the road-agents, and in the fight which followed Brentwood barely escaped with his life.

"Mutterings of anger and astonishment went round the circle of interested listeners.

"'What a pity,' said an old (i) said it was she had been foolish enough to point out to her false lover the rich fortune of one of the criminals she had found there; and, knowing she must soon discover the whole thing, and that he could then gain no shadow of claim to the treasure, killed her to get her out of the way.

"It was reported she was slain by a stray bullet, but the story has been generally believed. And Brentwood, to avoid even the shadow of suspicion, had the body burned.

"But, such wrongs, gentlemen, can't always go unsuspended and unpunished. She made not only his name a legal felony, but she also confid the papers and the secret to old Jo Williamson, who died, as you know, about a year ago. She confided the papers to Williamson, with a statement that they were to become his, together with the claim, in case of her death, as his rightful heir.

"Williamson, on his deathbed, in consideration of his years of service to his daughter, who resides in the East, asked his lawyer to deliver the papers to Jasper Raoul. Raoul had the old man decently interred, and paid every peso the old man had left, and paid her the five thousand. He returned a couple of days ago, and has now contested the title.

"It was a mystery, at first, why the official allowed the Tom-cat to put a filing on the claim when it had already been entered. But a little investigation cleared that up. A set of new books had been made out at the office, and in transferring the records this filing was overlooked and not recorded in the new ones. A search of the old records revealed it and established Raoul's title. There was a prior filing and the mining law had been fully complied with, the Tom-cat's title is bound to fail.

"The story was told with every appearance of candor, and the falsehoods were so mixed with facts, that the audience was entirely in the dark about the whole appearance of truth. Brentwood's blood had several times reached the boiling point during the recital. It was a matter, the way he kept his temper and kept his assumed character. He knew he was being ridiculous, it would be to reveal too much of the facts, either to point so strongly at himself. The very fact that he was being maquerading in disguise, was, so to speak, a confession of his guilt. Brentwood's blood had already reached the boiling point, and he almost had a fit of anger. The audacious mixture of falsehood and truth had taken the audience completely by surprise. He was easily as they raised mercilessly about him. And besides, he was ill at ease. The spreading story was fraught with peril to himself and the Tom-cat. He knew there was some black plot at the back of it, and that his life was in as much danger as its own.

"He was patient, however, and said, "I will go to the front before."

"One would suppose you to be a friend of Brentwood. May I ask your name? I don't remember having seen you in Callaho before?"

"Unfortunately, Brentwood was in no humor to parry such direct threats with ease and skill. "I want to speak to you, Mr. Johnson," he said, "if you wished to remain silent, he asserted, by the following illustration.

"'When a man is dead or not, is nobody's business, as far as I can see.'

"These warm words drew the crowd quickly together.

"'Brentwood's friend, eh?' shouted the gamblers, "and if it was any of your eyes and ears."

"'You are Brentwood himself?"

"Had a bomb been exploded in the room, it would have been no more surprising than this.

"Brentwood knew his disguise had been penetrated, and that evasions would be worse than useless. With one hand he clutched the ever-hesitating board, and with the other he drove his revolver, leaping at the same time to his feet.

"'Yes, I am Brentwood, and I held that fellow as a scorecard and a liar! I knew some damaging reports were being circulated by Raoul's tools, and I came here for the purpose of running them down.'

"He had placed his back against the wall, and now stood ready for his assailant.

"'That fellow says Hazel Thorpahath discovered the ore in the cave, and that I killed her sister for the sake of the claim. I say I made love to her and so gained her confidence. That is as black a lie as the first. The Tom-cat has been trying to make out that nobody knew anything about it. She never filed out the claim; and this story about old Jo Williamson upon the story of the Devil's Rascal, than whom a bigger scoundrel never lived!"

"He spoke hurriedly and almost incoherently, so wholly tumultuous were his thoughts.

"The crowd, who had been watching the eyes and dauntless bearing. Even the lying gambler, who, whatever his vices, has never been accused of being apathetic or shrunk under those burning glances.

"But, as the murmurs of voices swelled around him, the gambler's courage rapidly returned.

"No man had ever called him a liar and gone unpunished. The black veins on his forehead stood out flat like a broad vein, and he was an insult which only blood could wipe out.

"He made an almost indistinct motion to some of his confederates, and a fellow crept slyly to the revolver in the pocket of his coat.

"Brentwood saw and comprehended the motions, and his weapon instantly covered the gambler's broad breast.

"'No, I won't,' he cried. "I've got you covered, and if your men attempt any scaly tricks I'll surely put a bullet to it through you.'

"As he spoke he was assisted by the Tom-cat with a certain aim that it struck his right arm, knocking the gun from his grasp and temporarily disabling that member for a instant till the gambler leaped at him like an unleashed bull-dog.

"The latter had dropped his revolver and now flourished a wicked-looking knife. Brentwood's best arm was almost paralyzed, and it seemed that only a miracle could save him, as he stood thus surrounded by angry and bloodthirsty enemies.

"Then came a series of startling cries which caused all to look toward the open doorway.

"'Murder! Murder! Murder! It was the wild, fierce warcry of the Texas Tom-cat!'"
The cowboy had the misfortune to be captured, and Brentwood, while trying to rescue him and his wife, was suspected and his identity revealed.

"But I can't go into details, for, although the story is an interesting one, it's too long for me to tell now. Alas, I know. I only want to mention one or two points.

"The most important is that Black Ivan's daughter, the second victim of the daring detective, before his true character was known, and felt so desperately in love with him that she actually helped to aid the detective and his friends in every way possible.

"Brentwood, in order to keep her in his power, and use her as a pillion, made love to her ardently, and concealed from her the facts that his name was Tom-cat.

"The result was that when his treachery was discovered, she, filled with despair and death, she, at the risk of her life, released him and his friends and led them to the under-ground巢穴.

"With one exception, she was at that time, the only living person who knew of the existence of these chambers and the way to them. Because of a growing distrust she had not even confided the secret to her father.

"So you will see how much she believed in Brentwood when she revealed such valuable information to him and his friends.

"Finally the Tom-cat managed to pass the guards located in the chambers above, and brought up a body of armed men who had been sent there by Jackson, Chief of Police, of the Riverside City. They attacked the road-agents, and in the fight which followed Brentwood badly shot the wind-up man and the exasperated woman.

"Mutterings of anger and astonishment went round the circle of interested listeners.

"This is bad news!" said one. "She had been foolish enough to point out to her false lover the rich cache of one of her false lovers. What had she found there? and he, knowing how to use her love for him, had taken her to the secret of the chambers, and that he could then gain the shadow of claim to the gold, killed her to get her out of the way.

"It was reported she was slain by a stray bullet, but the story of how she was killed has been generally believed. And Brentwood, to avoid even the shadow of suspicion, had the Tom-cat murdered by his hirelings.

"But, such wrongs, gentlemen, can't always go unsuspected and unpunished. She had made an investigation, and, through legal friends, had confided the papers and the secret to the old Joe Williamson, who died, as you know, about a week ago, a poor man, who had always been active in the community. He at once had the papers and the secret to the dead man - the secret to the treasure hidden in the Treasure Chambers.

"Williamson, on his death-bed, in considerations of justice, was to be paid to his daughter who resides in the East, said the old man. He had nothing else to leave to his old friend Jasper Raoul. Raoul had the old man-decently buried and then paid him the thousand dollars promised.

"He returned a couple of days ago, and has now contested the title.

"It was a mystery, at first, why the officials allowed the Tom-cat to put a filing on the claim when it had already been entered. But a little investigation cleared that up. A set of new books had been made out at the office, and in transferring the records this filing was overlooked and not recorded in the new ones. A search of the old records revealed it and established Faith. Brentwood, who then had a prior filing and the mining law had been fully complied with, the Tom-cat's title is bound to fail.

"The story was told with every appearance of candor, and the falsehoods were so mixed with fact as to be almost wholly the appearance of truth. Brentwood's blood had several times reached the boiling point during the recital. It was touching to see how he restrained his temper and kept his assumed character. His knuckles were white and his face was as red as a beetroot.

"The audacious mixture of falsehood and truth had gone to Brentwood's head, and he almost had the patience to listen to the question of questions and comments now being made. They were not at all complimentary to his character, and he paid no attention to them.

"The Tom-cat, however, spoke easily as they raised mercilessly about him. And besides, he was ill at ease. The preceding story was fraught with peril to himself and the Tom-cat. He knew there was some black plot at the back of it, and that his life was in quite as much danger as the squaw's.

"Seeing him sit so silent, while others were bustling with eagerness, the narrator turned to him and said:

"'One would suppose you to be a friend of Brentwood. May I ask your name? I don't want you to have seen you in Custer before.'

"Unfortunately, Brentwood was in no humor to parry such direct thrusts with ease and skill. He was not accustomed to conflict, and he had to talk, if he wished to remain silent," he asserted, nettled by the fellow's insolence.

"'When I say that your name is not, or not, is nobody's business, as far as I can see.'

"These warm words drew the crowd quickly.

"'Brentwood's friend, eh?' shouted the gambler, pointing to himself with blurred eyes and ears.

"'You are Brentwood himself!'

"Had a bomb been exploded in the room, it would have caused less surprise than this.

"Brentwood knew his disguise had been penetrated, and that even this gambler would be worse than useless. With one hand he stroked the spade of his guising beard, and with the other he dashed his revolver, leaping at the same time to his feet.

"'Yes, I am Bruce Brentwood, and I demand that fellow as a scoundrel and a liar! I knew some damaging reports were being circulated by Raoul's tools, and I came here for the purpose of running them down.'

"He had placed his back against the wall, and now stared the Tom-cat straight in the face.

"'That fellow says Hazel Thorpahp discovered the ore in the cavern, and that I killed her and got the gold from her. I never did,' says I love made to her, and so gained her confidence.

"That is as black a lie as the first, the Tom-cat answered.

"'And you say I have a new path known about it. She never filed on the claim; and this story about old Jo Williamson, so often referred to, was one of the Devil's Mountain Mine. The fact that Brentwood visited the place in disguise was absolutely known of. As one of the mining managers was concealed all the time in the vicinity, the Tom-cat knew Brentwood's disguise be penetrated, and their flight was rather boldly described as ignominious.'

"The cowboy's hot blood seethed in fiery wrath, and he would have sallied out on the instant for the purpose of administering bodily chastisement to the editor of the libelous sheet if Brentwood's words had not checked him.

"'Take my advice: Let's try to keep cool and talk the matter over,' the editor had said. Brentwood, the cowboy, seemed to understand.

"He was interrupted by a loud rap on the office door. When it was opened an officer entered.

"Tom-cat stared angrily at him, as if he had some thoughts of tossing him bodily out of the office, and said in an abrupt manner:

"'Well?' questioned Brentwood, as the official fumbled ceremonially among a package of documents.

"'Injunction papers!' was the curt reply, as he drew out the proper ones and handed them to the superintendent. "I am only doing duty. It is claimed the mine here does not rightfully belong to you. You have contested the title. The court has asked the court to enjoin you from working it till the question of title has been settled.

"'I have no legal notification of his claim!"

"The officer pointed silently to the Spray, where the man had been served, and complained the printed notice usual in such cases.

"I suppose you will also find a notification in progress here."
The cowboy had the misfortune to be captured, and Brentwood, while trying to rescue him and his wife, was suspected and his identity revealed.

"But I can't go into details, for, although the story is an interesting one, it's too long for me to relate it to you. Alas, now. I only want to mention one or two points.

"The most important is that Black Ivan's daughter, the only offspring of the dashing detective, before his true character was known, and fell so desperately in love with her that she sent for him to come home and aided the detective and his friends in every way possible.

"Brentwood, in order to keep her in his power, and use her as a pliant tool, made love to her ardently, and concealed from her the fact that he was the detective."

"The result was that when his treachery was discovered, she ran off with him, and death, at the risk of her life, released him and his friends and led them to the undergrowth."

"With one exception, she was at that time, the only living person who knew of the existence of these chambers and the way to them. Because of a growing distrust she had not even confided this information to her father.

"So you see how much she believed in Brentwood when she revealed such valuable information to him and his friends.

"Finally the Tom-cat managed to pass the guards located in the chambers above, and brought up a body of armed men who had been sent for by his friend, Cliff Grant, of the Sheriff's Office in New York City. They attacked the road-agents, and in the fight which followed Brentwood barely slithered away with his life untouched."

"Mutterings of anger and astonishment went round the circle of interested listeners.

"A dog! Indeed! She? Had she been foolish enough to point out to her false lover the rich story of Little Joe that she had found there; and he, knowing she must soon discover the secret and that he could then gain no shadow of claim to the treasure, killed her to get her out of the way."

"It was reported she was slain by a stray bullet, but no one knew who fired it. The story has been generally believed. And Brentwood, too, to avoid even the shadow of suspicion, had the Tom-cat killed.

"But, such wrongs, gentlemen, can't always go unnoticed and unpunished. She had made an appeal to her local legal forces, and they had confided the papers and the secret to old John Williamson, who died, as you know, about a week ago, leaving the papers to his son, Jasper, of whom you have heard.

"Williamson, on his death-bed, in considerations of justice, made an effort to be paid to his daughter who resides in the East, and the papers were given to Jasper Raulp. Raulp had the old man decently buried and paid the expenses, and he returned a couple of days ago, and has now contested the title.

"It was a mystery, at first, why the officials allowed the Tom-cat to put a filing on the claim when it had already been entered. But a little investigation cleared that up. A set of new books had been made out at the office, and in transferring the records this filing was overlooked and not recorded in the new ones. A search of the old records revealed it and established Jasper Raulp's just claim. There was also a prior filing and the mining law had been fully complied with, the Tom-cat's title is bound to fail.

"The story was told with every appearance of candor, and the falsehoods were so mixed with fact, that it was hopeless to uphold the whole appeal of truth. Brentwood's blood had several times reached the boiling point during the recital. It was a repugnant thing to relive the past and to have theMemory of those ill-advised and straitened his temper and kept his assumed character. He knew that the recollection would be too painful to reserve for while the fraction was pointed so strongly at him. Very much the fact that he was being maundering in disgrace was true, and the official, who was as obstinate as he was prejudiced, said he was not at all uninteresting.

"The audacious mixture of falsehood and truth had interested the crowd almost beyond his interest, and a running fire of questions and comments now began. They were not at all combative in tone, but rather treated as a story easily as they raised mercilessly about him. And besides, he was ill at ease. The preceding story was fraught with peril to himself and the Tom-cat. He knew there was some black plot at the back of it, and that his life was in just as much peril as ever.

"Seeing him sit so silent, while others were butting with excited interest, the narrator turned his story to him.

"One would suppose you to be a friend of Brentwood. May I ask your name? I don't recognize you as having seen you in our purgatory before."

"Unfortunately, Brentwood was in no humor to parry such direct thrusts with ease and skill. "I wasn't there, easy," he answered, "I'd like to talk, if he wished to remain silent," he asserted, nettled by the fellow's insolence.

"When he had completed his business or not, is nobody's business, as far as I can see."

"These warm words drew the crowd quickly.

"'Brentwood's friend, eh?' shouted the gambler. "Are you a gentleman with eyes and ears."

"'You are Brentwood himself!"

"Had a bomb been exploded in the room, it would have fallen more pleasantly. Brentwood knew his disguise had been penetrated, and that he would be at a disadvantage. So he went on, trying to conceal the other with the Hebrew and, with the other he described his revolver, leaping at the same time to his feet."

"'Yes, I am sure Brentwood. I knew that fellow as a scoundrel and a liar. I knew some damaging reports were being circulated by Raulp's tools, and I came here for the purpose of running them down.'"

"He had placed his back against the wall, and now started for the door.

"'That fellow says Hazel Thorp brought the ore in the cavern, and that I killed her; her name isn't in the ore and it wasn't the same girl. I say that I made love to her and so gained her confidence. That is as black a lie as the first. The Tom-cat's story is pure hogwash. That fellow had no more right to the papers than Raulp, than whom a bigger scoundrel never lived."

"He spoke hurriedly and almost indistinctly, so whirlingly tumultuous were his thoughts. The crowd paid no heed to the deep-set eyes and dauntless bearing. Even the lying gambler, who, whatever his vices, had never seen anything except acrobats and shrunk under those burning glances.

"But, as the murmur of voices swelled around him, the gambler's courage slowly returned. No man had ever called him a liar and gone unpunished. The black veins on his forehead stood out like a mule's veins in his neck, and it was an insult which only blood could wipe out."

"He made an almost indistinct notion to some of his companions that he had been crept slyly to the revolver in the pocket of his coat."

"Brentwood saw and comprehended the motions, and his weapon instantly covered the gambler's broad breast.

"'No,' he said, 'I have cried. 'I've got you covered, and if your men attempt any scaly tricks I'll surely put a bullet to kill through you.'"

"As he spoke, he forced with a certain aim that it struck his right arm, knocking the pistol from its grasp and temporarily disabling that man. The instant the gambler leaped at him like an unleashed bull."

"The latter had dropped his revolver and now flourished a wicked-looking knife. Brentwood's best arm was almost paralyzed, and it seemed that only a miracle could save him, as he stood thus surrounded by angry and bloodthirsty enemies.

"Then came a series of startling cries which caused all to look toward the open doorway. "We've got 'em! We've got 'em!"

"It was the wild, fierce war-cry of the Texas Tom-cat!

CHAPTER III

SUSPICION THICKENS.

A PREMONITION OF PERIL TO HIS FRIEND.

The cowboy had drawn the Tom-cat toward the Miner's Rest, after the crowd had dispersed, and entered, and was now retracing his way. Brentwood's loud words, and the excitement within, were clearly audible coming out of the hotel. As he comprehended its character he drew his revolver and bounded to the rescue.

As he entered the room, the well-directed blow from Brentwood's left fist felled the gambler in a sitting position. This was followed by a crushing of glass as the Tom-cat hurled a chair against the nearest chandelier.

Before the crowd could recover from the confusion into which they were thus temporarily thrown, he grasped Brentwood by the arm and held him back.

"Side!" he whispered. "That's all my motto when fightin' won't pay. Now bluff a little and come on."

The gambler turned and looked at the crowd, and now stopped to listen to the confused sounds issuing from the saloon. The gambler was roaring angrily at the Tom-cat, and a crowd of men rolled bellowing into the thoroughfare.

Brentwood and Tom-cat stepped unobserved into the alley across the way, and, screened from observation, watched the movements of the crowd. But the gambler's manager had developed, they made their way cautiously from the vicinity, and Brentwood asked:

"What was it all about?" asked Tom-cat, his interest awaking when the danger had passed. "These men come on like a tavern of Texas sleers."

He became grave, as Brentwood related the particulars.

"The pizen skunks!"

"They're a bad lot, certain," was Brentwood's reply, "so that they're bound to give us trouble. It may be a conspiracy to ruin us for the part we took against the gamblers. It is a deep plot to prevent their wrongs, but we have suspected."

"They're a pretty thing, they intend to turn the town against us if they can.

The next morning there was ample confirmation of the plot.

The first disturbing discovery was that the only paper in the town, the Ocartar Spray, had been printed with a distorted account of the affair at the Miner's Rest, every sentence of which was so worded as to mislead the public into the belief that Brentwood was the scalp-killing part of the Devil's Mountain Mine. The fact that Brentwood visited the place in disguise was not mentioned.

The gambler's manager was concealed all the time in the vicinity, and Brentwood's disguise was penetrated, and their flight was rather boldly described as ignominious.

"I'll not take the Tom-cat's bloodied in such a wrath, and he would have sailed out on the instant for the purpose of administering bodily chastisement to the editor of the libelous sheet if Brentwood's words had not checked him.

"Take my advice: Let's try to cool and talk the matter over. The editor has been prodded to his senses, and I believe the idea of the town will assuredly not be so much as to swallow his stories without at least giving themselves some leisure time.

The cowboy's hot blood settled in fiery wrath, and he would have sailed out on the instant for the purpose of administering bodily chastisement to the editor of the libelous sheet if Brentwood's words had not checked him.

"This town owes its very existence to us, and we have many friends who will stand by us in such cases.

He was interrupted by a loud rap on the office door. When it was opened an officer entered.

Tom-cat stared angrily at him, as if he had some thoughts of tossing him bodily out of the opening, and said, "Well?"

"We'll question Brentwood, as the official remarked caustically among a package of papers, having no legal notification of his claim!"

The officer pointed silently to the Spray, where the editor had not received the printed notice usual in such cases.

"I suppose you will also find a notification in some other sheet!"

Then, with a smile which seemed half a sneer, he bowed himself out.

"He said Brentwood, attempting to laugh. "What it all means or what the outcome will be I can't see. We'll have to sit down and wait and see. We'll have to wait and see and dispose of the matter as you see fit. We must know at once what profit they have, if any, so we can prepare to meet it."

He fingered a wad of paper, and offered sufficient bond to permit us to continue working the mine. I will write the editor of the Spray, and find out if I can what the law, the court, and the judge will do."

"A gentle hint that
The cowboy had the misfortune to be captured, and Brentwood, while trying to rescue him and his wife, was suspected and his identity revealed.

"But I can't go into details, for, although the story is an interesting one, it's too long for me to tell here and now. All I know, I only want to mention one or two points.

The most important is that Black Ivan's daughter was the principal victim of the dashing detective, before his true character was known, and fell so desperately in love with him that she was the only one who tried to aid the detective and his friends in every way possible.

Brentwood, in order to keep her in his power, and use her as a plant tool, made love to her ardently, and concealed from her the fact that he was a detective.

The result was that when his treachery was discovered, she was frightened to death, and Brentwood, fearing her life, released him and his friends and led them to the undergrowth nearby.

With one exception, she was at that time, the only living person who knew of the existence of these chambers and the way to them. Because of a growing distrust she had not even confided the secret to her father.

So you will see how much she believed in Brentwood when she revealed such valuable information to him and his friends.

Finally the Tom-cat managed to pass the guards located in the chambers above, and brought up a body of armed men who had been sent in by Mr. Brentwood, Chief of the Treasure City. They attacked the road-agents, and in the fight which followed Brentwood barely escaped with his life.

Mutterings of anger and astonishment went round the circle of interested listeners.

"Tell the truth!" said a man. "She had been foolish enough to point out to her false lover the rich gold mine of which she had found trace, and he, knowing he must soon disappear, confided the papers and the secret to old Jo Williamson, who died, as you know, about a week ago.

But, such wrongs, gentlemen, can't always go unsuspended and unpunished. She had made an enemy of Jo, and her life was in danger.

Williamson, on his death-bed, in consideration of the great help he had been to his daughter, left the remaining treasure to Jasper Raoul. Raoul had the old man deceptively placed up in the hills, and paid her the five thousand. He returned a couple of days ago, and has now contested the title.

It was a mystery, at first, why the officials allowed the Tom-cat to put a filing on the claim when it had been already entered. But a little investigation cleared that up. A set of new books had been made out at the office, and in transferring the record this filing was overlooked and not recorded in the new ones. A search of the old records revealed it and established Raoul's title, but there was a prior filing and the mining law had been fully complied with, the Tom-cat's title is bound to fall.

The story was told with every appearance of candor, and the falsehoods were so mixed with fact that it was quite impossible to tell the whole apparent truth. Brentwood's blood had several times reached the boiling point during the recital. It was an old curse upon the Tom-cat to have estrained his temper and kept his assumed character. He knew it would be a futility to attempt to reverse a point of such weight as long as the charge was pointed so strongly at him. The very fact that he was being maundering in disguise was the reason that he had estrained himself.

The audacious mixture of falsehood and truth had made it almost impossible for any one to believe the story, and a running fire of questions and comment from both women. They were not at all combined and�story was fought with pern to himself and the Tom-cat. He knew there was some black plot at the back of it, and that his life was in quite as much danger as ever before.

Seeing him sitting so silent, while others were bustling with excited interest, the narrator turned to him with a quick thought.

"One would suppose you to be a friend of Brentwood. May I ask your name? I don't know that I have ever seen you in our front before."

Unfortunately, Brentwood was in no humor to parry such direct thrusts with ease and skill. He was more than willing to give the Tom-cat a few choice words, and to talk, if he wished to remain silent," he asserted, nettled by the fellow's insolence.

"When were you here before, or is nobody's business, as far as I can see."

These warm words drew the crowd quickly to Brentwood's side.

"Brentwood's friend, eh? Shouted the gambler, with a mad gleam in his eyes and ears. "You are Brentwood himself!"

Had a bomb been exploded in the room, it would not have produced a surprise more than this.

Brentwood knew his disguise had been penetrated, and that evasions would be worse than useless. With one hand he steadied the ever-moving, guising beard, and with the other he described his revolver, leaping at the same time to his feet.

"Yes, I am a friend of Brentwood, and I lived that fellow as a son and a brother. I knew some damaging reports were being circulated by Raoul's tools, and I came here for the purpose of running them down."

He had placed his back against the wall, and now stood in full view of the room.

"That fellow says Hazel Thorpaph discovered the ore in the cavern, and that I killed her and her little boy. If so, I am the one to blame."

He said it with a smile, and struck his hand over his heart.

"I know I made love to her and so gained her confidence. That is as black as lie the first. The Tom-cat's curse, but the man who deep down knew nothing about it. She never filed on the claim; and this story about old Jo Williamson was a fabrication, so Raoul, than whom a bigger scoundrel never lived!"

He spoke hurriedly and almost insistently, so whimsically tumultuous were his thoughts. The criminal had the eyes of a man who has been exonerated of his civic errors and dauntless bearing. Even the lying gambler, who, whatever his virtues, had never seen a man who could defy and shrink under those burning glances.

But, as the murmors of voices swelled around him, the gambler's courage slowly returned. No man had ever called him a liar and gone unpunished. The black veins on his forehead stood out like deep lines of pain, and he was an insult which only blood could wipe out.

He made an almost indistinct motion to some of his companions, and in a few minutes, a crept slyly to the revolver in the pocket of his coat.

Brentwood saw and comprehended the motions, and his weapon instantly covered the gambler's broad breast.

"No need to cry," he said. "I've got you covered, and if your men attempt any scaly tricks I'll surely put a bullet to kill through you."

As he spoke he raised the gun with a certain aim that it struck his right arm, knocking the finger out from his grasp and temporarily disabling that member. The instant the gambler leaped at him like an unleashed bull dog.

The latter had dropped his revolver and now flourished a wicked-looking knife. Brentwood's best arm was almost paralyzed, and it seemed that only a miracle could save him, as he stood thus surrounded by angry and bloodthirsty enemies.

Then came a series of startling cries which caused all to look toward the open doorway.

"Murder! Murder!"

It was the wild, fierce warcry of the Texas Tom-cat!

CHAPTER III

SUSPICION THICKENS.

A PREMONITION OF PERIL TO HIS FRIEND HAD DRAWN THE TOM-CAT TOWARD THE MINER'S REST. THE اللعجك, which he had ordered to enter, and was now retracing his way. Brentwood's loud words, and the excitement within, had caused the gamblers to startle back, as he comprehended its character he drew his revolver and bounded to the rescue.

As he entered, the well-directed blow from Brentwood's left fist flung the gambler in a heap. This was followed by a crashing of glass as the Tom-cat hurled a chair against the nearest chandelier.

Before the crowd could recover from the confusion into which they were thus temporarily thrown, he grasped Brentwood by the arm and held him at bay.

"Sidle!" he whispered. "That's all my motto when fightin' won't pay. Now, bluff a fence and get out of here.

"Then you'll never get to the trail, and now stop to listen to the confused sounds issuing from the saloon. The gambler was roaring angrily back at him."

Brentwood had not a moment to lose, and swiftly turned him against us. A gentle hint that
The Tom-cat had no perfected plans, and a little later the detective left the office. He went directly home, and did not appear again until after breakfast. Then it was in a disguise so perfect there was little danger of its being penetrated.

About two o'clock, he visited the Miner's Rest, and watched the hoisters throng that streamed in and out of this popular dancing place. But, after a thorough search, the only sign of Rayon could not be found. The air was thick with slanderous comments on the acts, remote and recent, of himself and Tom-cat, and not one of the hoisters was fully resolved not to reveal himself under any circumstances.

Finally, as the hours wore on and Rayon did not come, he set himself to observing the movements of the gambler with whom he had long attended the square.

This soon promised rich results, for, the gambler had kept himself hidden, and occasionally whispering a word in a confidential way. The detective noticed that all the men had been paying attention to one room, and this was the only one to which they went.

Some kind of meeting or consultation of the men who were there, this plot, he collected.

"I will have to attend, with the rest of the crowd." He could lose the plotters disappeared. Then, as the hour verged on midnight, the gambler followed them.

Brentwood being at the man's heels as persistently as his own shadow. It was a rare night for the execution of such a task. A yellow moon was but little light on the scene, hidden wholly by tall, ragged clouds. The yellow light was thus sufficient for the detection of the figures. In the past the gambler was taking, he could follow him, and at the same time conceal his own stealthy movements.

Beyond the outskirts of the town, in a rocky garden, was one of the houses. It had been a miner's hut, intended only for a temporary habitation, and rather flimsily built. A strong wind of TREASON, and a storm of gorse seared it from the haunts of men.

Before the door of this hut the gambler stopped and entered. The door was slightly opened and he vanished within.

"Tread," exclaimed Brentwood, with a sigh of satisfaction as he watched those walls. "Now to see what they are up to."

A pencil of light had issued when the door opened, and it was shaded by a small globe. Gliding quickly to the opposite side of the structure, he sought for some crevice through which he could hear. None presented, and he defied swallow himself into the spreading branches of the nearest tree.

Brentwood's mind of voices reached him there, but he could hear nothing distinctly and see nothing at all. His swaying feet touched the ground only when he reached there. All about, he discovered that some of the boards were torn loose. Some others, however, he passed his hands over these shaky boards. He drew out one, then another, and another, till the guttering fire and the number of men in the room below were plainly revealed.

Gathering up the boards he had removed, he threw them to the floor, thus protecting them from the chance that the wind might hurl them to the earth in a cluttering mass. Then he climbed up again and, stretching himself at full length on the roof, applied an eye to the aperture.

There sat a group of men, and among them, pre- sening that troublesome precaution to the chance that the wind might hurl them to the earth in a fluttering mass. Then he climbed up again and, stretching himself at full length on the roof, applied an eye to the aperture.

That first glance repaid him for all his efforts. There, plainly revealed to his astonished gaze, was the notorious outlaw, Ivan Thorne, known as Chief Ivan, the road-agent. There was a price on the outlaw's head, and the detective had believed the man was dead, and there he stood, plainly revealed by the light of the candle, and evidently acknowledge as chief by his band of followers.

The fact explained much that had been dark to Black Ivan. He was the ruling and moving spirit of the band of road- agents, and the only one risen in the path of himself and the Tom-cat. Rayon had no chance to reach Black Ivan. Then, fully to set the tool he used, he hurried his way to the rear.

Black Ivan had arisen, and the hum of conversation, excitement, and the presence of a commanding figure. Not from any special prominence given by reason of right and brawn, for he was a mere youth; but there was a commanding light in his gleaming black eyes, and his swarthy, Upsy face was a mark of a coming man.

When he began to speak, the evil-browed men and the white-faced gamblers hung with equal interest on every word. There was a discussion about the Romany that seemed to lead them captive.

"We mustn't, members of the Combine," he began, glancing about approvingly, "I have to thank you especially for the splendid beginning that has been made, and I have no doubt that we can work more to my taste. We already have them on the defensive, and the people of the South are beginning to realize how much they can lose than we could expect, when we remember the hold these villains had gained over them."

"We are working over the dimly-lighted room. They now fell on the face of the editor of the Spring." "We have therefore been able to secure the milk in the cornstalk." he muttered. "No doubt all my turncoat friends are leagued with the Black Ivan to seize the machine."

"The scene of the recent attack on the sufferer from the Revengers I am striving for, and revenge I will have."

"You are not going to belong to the hand when Brentwood joined it and plotted its overthrow and ruin; and when the Tom-cat fell on us with his team of men. They have been our enemies ever since."

"The comrade was slain as mercilessly as if they were wild wolves of the mountains. Not only that, but the followers of Black Ivan were killed. Whether it was by Brentwood's bullet or by the hand of a man whose mind was wholly inimical to me, though I have made it up to be the report circulated that he did it."

"I am glad to know that remains if those men had not been brought up there would have been no fight, and my daughter, whom I love as the flower of my life, would have been alive to-day. My brain whirled when I saw her lying dead at my feet, and I registered a sense of vengeance that should have made me a man who had brought about her death had been punished. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. This is a good motto."

"This is a good motto, and it is the one I live by."

Since coming here I have been questioned as to the possibility of finding a man wherever I am; I have been told that the work I lay in the secret. I have advised him not to appear at these meetings. Brentwood has been ordered to arrest me and take me by force of times, but I have always been able to evade him. Fate has, I think, reserved me for a greater destiny."

"As it would be injudicious for me to appear openly it became necessary that I should have a means of communication with a man who could work only the work I lay cut in secret. I have advised him not to appear at these meetings. Brentwood has been ordered to arrest me and take me by force of times, but I have always been able to evade him. Fate has, I think, reserved me for a greater destiny."

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we will start an opposition paper if he don’t up and say no more.

He took up his hat and went out, and the Tom-cat walked back and forth a little, and the orneriness of the old man, and his nervousness, and his curiosity, and his fear, all came to a head.

Finally, the hour of the awaking had passed, and the Tom-cat was on the way to the office. The tissues of the earth were still cold, and the day was just breaking.

The Tom-cat had no perfected plans, and a little later the detective left the office. He went directly home, and did not appear again until the next morning.

After that, he searched the city, and it was found that there was nothing to be done, and that the situation was as desperate as it was then.

Then it was in a disguise so perfect that there was little danger of its being penetrated.

But, after all, he had realized the value of his work, and the necessity of his continued presence in the city, and the necessity of his continued presence in the city.

Finally, as the hours wore on and away and the gambler did not come, he sat himself to observing the movements of the gambler with whom he had connected the unexpected difficulty.

This soon promised rich results, for the gambler was a busy man, and he was constantly whispering a word in a confidential way.

The detective noticed that all the men who came from the office and the room and made their way into the street.

Some kind of meeting or consolitation of the men who were about, lasted this plot, he soliloquized.

"I will have to attend, with the rest of the crowd.

But the plotters disappeared. Then, as the hour verged on midnight, the gambler followed them.

Brentwood, standing at the man’s heels as persistently as his own shadow, was a rare sight for the execution of such a task. A yellow glow arose on the horizon, and the man was alight with the hope that he might be of service to the man who was taking, and at the same time conceal his own stealthy movements.

Beyond the outskirts of the town, in a rocky cleft, was a hidden landmark. It had been a mine that had been brought up there would have been no fight, and my daughter, whom I love, was saved. And I have felt as if the men who had brought about her death had been punished. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. It is a good motto, and it is the one I live by.

Since coming here I have been questioned as to my connection with the Devil’s Mountain Mine. As you know I have been hunted like a partridge from the Mexican desert to the plains of Asia, and my appearance on the scene of action would be the signal for my instant arrest. Brentwood was ordered to arrest me at all times, but I have always been on my guard to evade him. Fate has, I think, reserved me a better destiny.

"As it would be injudicious for me to appear openly it became necessary that I should have a man who could carry the work I lay cut in secret. I have advised him not to appear at these meetings. Brentwood and I are not lost to the United States, and I will try to start the situation in the city.

After visiting a number of men and explaining the plan, he went to his office. The Tom-cat was already there, having performed his mission satisfactorily. Cold greetings were at hand, however, brought him to a dangerous pitch.

"Raoul’s men scatter the brand like confetti in a breeze, and they are not afraid of black eyes or and every wind’s jest a-famin’ the flames."

"I know it," was the serene response. "But, what about the rest? I am off the trail again to-night, and hope to accomplish something.

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Since coming here I have been questioned as to my connection with the Devil’s Mountain Mine. As you know I have been hunted like a partridge from the Mexican desert to the plains of Asia, and my appearance on the scene of action would be the signal for my instant arrest. Brentwood was ordered to arrest me at all times, but I have always been on my guard to evade him. Fate has, I think, reserved me a better destiny.

"As it would be injudicious for me to appear openly it became necessary that I should have a man who could carry the work I lay cut in secret. I have advised him not to appear at these meetings. Brentwood and I are not lost to the United States, and I will try to start the situation in the city.

After visiting a number of men and explaining the plan, he went to his office. The Tom-cat was already there, having performed his mission satisfactorily. Cold greetings were at hand, however, brought him to a dangerous pitch.

"Raoul’s men scatter the brand like confetti in a breeze, and they are not afraid of black eyes or and every wind’s jest a-famin’ the flames."

"I know it," was the serene response. "But, what about the rest? I am off the trail again to-night, and hope to accomplish something.
we will start an opposition paper if he don’t up lay do him good.”

He took up his hat and went out, and the Tom-cat followed. The latter was in an irate mood. His reckless spirit frettet under the restraints with which he was subjected. Yet he pleased him better than a cautious, timorizing one.

“I’ll bite in crackin’ a snake’s head jest as quick as ye see it,” he growled, pulling his beloved cap well over his ears. We moun’t as well make him uncomfortable as that, you little puttock that’s climbed ahead o’ us, an’ wade in full as we’ve last.”

“Aye,” said the gambler, smiling.

“My idea would be to go for that air Raoul like a young airthquake. Take him by the world and tear him through the ordnary dog. Still, Brentwood’s a long-headed chap an’ I’m willing to let him be foreman. Maybe he has a little too much goin’ too. I’ll have to be careful not to tussle to the death. Then I’ll ast to be allowed to chip in.”

Brentwood he was thoroughly satisfied the plan he had imperfectly outlined was the best one to pursue, and took his way to the office of the gray with a firm step to com- pense. He knew the editor and hoped to be able to warn considerable information out of him, and perhaps induce him to again transfer his allegiance.

The frozen with the editor greeted him tenderly to dissipate the rest. The editor had been painting. Evidently the man of the pen was not likely to prove material.

A little later an article by Gaskell was done. Brentwood questioned, coaxing a smile to his face, as he pointed to the following article.

“It’s all right isn’t it?” Gaskell answered, stiffly.

“With a good many exceptions—yes. But the misstatements are so many and glaring that the whole thing might just as well be a falsehood. We have no excuse for such accidents in this case.”

“I will return to the editorial desk.”

“See here, Gaskell, you can’t afford to mis- report his style. He may come out in the field, and then who is to take up his case?”

Brentwood declared, chafing under the other’s insulting coolness.

“You know it How do you know that?”

“Because we have befriended you in the past, and could rain you now if we so desired.”

But the editor brushed it off, and left the room.

“Brentwood, So I’ll say what I have to say. I didn’t come to this God-forsaken country solely for my life. My career and my whistle are wines.”

The gambler was looking at the editor. He had been pocketbook was the all-powerful persuader. I have a chance to fill that pocketbook, and I don’t intend to lose it.

And you would do it by slandering a man who has always stood by you?’

“Most unfriendly editor flashed, but did not strike a rejoinder.

Any rate, you suppose I will allow me a reply?”

At our usual advertising rates, that is the case.”

“I see you are in the plot Raoul is hooking against us, so it’s no use to argue. I will insert an article to that effect in the Thursday paper, adver- tising. But I warn you that you are rushing to your own destruction. This plot is bound to fail, and the day of reckoning is at hand. You only bolster a case against us by resorting to reckless perjury; and perjury can never stand before the best investigation, which is now bound to come.

With this declaration the detective bowed himself out.

What to do next he scarcely knew, for a time wandered aimlessly about the town, en- joying the continent. He found some plan that would bring immediate results.

While thus engaged he was frequently an- gry, as a man who has to keep a watch and a book on board, and found no time to check on befriended in any extremity.

The virus is working,” he muttered. “We will have to kill off this editor, or we will kill us.

CHAPTER IV

FOUL PLOTTING.

After visiting a number of men and explain- ing to them the plan of the Tom-cat, he went to the office. The Tom-cat was already there, having performed his mission successfully. Cold greet- ingly he was received, however, brought the gambler to a dangerous pitch.

“Raoul’s men air scurrrentn the brancs like people runnin’ like hell,” he continued, “and every wind’s jest ‘a-findin’ the flames.”

“I know it,” was the serene response. “But, what the devil do you want me to do on the trail again to-night, and hope to accomplish something.”

The Tom-cat had no perfected plans, and a little later the detective left the office. He went directly home, and did not appear again until after dinner. Then it was in a disguise so perfect there was little danger of its being penetrated.

Black Ivan, being the visitor’s chief, and the best of the men, was sent to the Mining Department and then to the office. The air was thick with slanderous comments on the acts, remote and recent, of himself and Tom- cat’s men, and he was fully recog- nized to have revealed his gambling nature.

Finally, as the hours wore away and Raoul did not come, he set himself to observing the movements of the gambler with whom he had mingled the afternoon.

This soon promised rich results, for the gam- bler, after remaining a while in the lobby and occasionally whispering a word in a confidential way. The detective noticed that all the men went to their rooms in order to clear the room and made their way into the street.

Some kind of meeting or consultation of the men who were about, lasting this plot,” he solemnly
told. “I will have to attend, with the rest of the crowd.”

Could some of the plotters disappeared. Then, as the hour verged on midnight, the gambler followed them.

Brentwood sing at the man’s heels as persist- ently as his own shadow. It was a rare night for the execution of such a task. A yellow light was thrown into the room, and rent and by a sudden gust of wind. The gambler was taking, he could follow him, and at the time countes own his stealthy moveme-

Beyond the outskirts of the town, in a rocky gorge was a wild place. It had been a mine’s hut, intended only for a tempo- rary habitation, and rather flimsily built. A slight breath of treachery made the gorge seem like a great spectre, which crept over the fiends of the nearest tree.

Brentwood’s man of votes reached him there, but he could hearken nothing distinctly and see nothing at all. His swaying feet touched the ground, and the moonlight played there, so that he discovered that some of the boards were缝 and loose. He felt that the two walls were of men in the room below were plainly revealed.

Gathering up the boards he had removed, he climbed up, and took them, pro- ferring that troublesome precaution to the chance that the wind might hurl them to the earth in a clattering mass. Then he climbed up again and, stretching himself at full length on the roof, applied an eye to the aperture.

That first glance repaired him for all his ado. There, plainly revealed to his astonished gaze, was the notorious outlaw, Ivan Thorn, fast and well hidden as Black Ivan, the road-agent. There was a price on the outlaw’s head, and the detective had believed the man was30 miles away. There he stood, plainly revealed by the light of the candle, and evidently acknowledged as chief by this band of ruffians.

The fact explained much that had been dark to him. Black Ivan was the ruling and moving spirit of the numbers. It was only risen in the path of himself and the Tom-cat. Raoul knew his black Ivan. He was not afraid, for, with the tool he used to have his revenge.

Black Ivan had arisen, and the hum of con- veying cries, and the actual beginning of a com- manding figure. Not from any special promi- nence given him by reason of height and braun, for he was quite small, but with a commanding light in his gleaming black eyes, and his swarthy, Ufope face was the only one of a crowd.

When he began to speak, the evil-browed men and the white-faced gamblers hung with equal interest on every word. There was a dearth of un- certainty about the Romany that seemed to lead them captive.

“Ladies, members of the Combiit,” he began, glancing about approvingly, “I have to thank you especially for the splendid beginning you have made. I don’t think you could have worked more to my taste. We already have them on the defensive, and the people of the town seem to have understood that we have not very much longer to expect their present position. I didn’t expect when we remember the hold these villains had gained over them, the impression coming over the dimly-lighted room. They now fell on the face of the editor.

“The presence here of the milk in the comonut!” he muttered. “No doubt all my turn-coat friends are led with Black Ivan and apt to remember the scoundrel later on.”

In his eyes again set the movements of Black Ivan.

The speech had gone on, and after much lau- dering, the editor invited him to talk of his aims and hopes, and the rewards to be gained by those faithful to the league. You are working for money, my men, and you shall have it, if silver bars and mining stock do not wholly lose their value in the eyes of men. As his Combiit, which was the owner, the Revengers is what I am striving for, and revenge I will have.

Many men of you belong to my hand when Brentwood joined it and plotted its overthrow and ruin, and when the Tom-cat fell on us with his hated and dastardly gripe, our comrades were slain as mercilessly as if they were wild wolves of the mountains. Not only were they killed, but others were murdered. Whether it was by Brentwood’s order, or for a matter wholly immaterial to me, though I have read the report circulated that he did it.

But this I would moreover, that if those men had not been brought up there would have been no fight, and my daughter, whom I love more than life, has always been alive to-day. My brain whirled when I saw her lying dead at my feet, and I registered a solemn vow that when I should have known those men who had brought about her death had been punished. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth is good law. It is a good motto, and it is the one I live by.

Since coming here I have questioned the editor and his comrades, and I know that this is working in perfect harmony with me. Circumstances render it unwise for me to appear openly, yet I have upon your nexion, and I am in constant fear he may scent out our secret gatherings. If he discovers anybody he will naturally slay Raoul. Therefore should Raoul attend these meetings the danger of their discovery becomes very great. So I have advised him to remain away from. Most of you who are here are not suspected and consequently will not be shut up. I will communicate with Raoul. You ought never to be seen with him. If you are, you will also communicate to him my orders. By working that way we can beleve even as long as love. As long as love lasts love fades, and we return again to Morrow night, and every night thereafter as long as it may be necessary, to the editor of this paper. At such times I will give you my commands.

“You must understand, though, that you are to make no promises which I cannot at some time or moment. If you do, your orders will be my orders, and on the perfect faithfulness with which you will do them. You will be the eyes of our enterprise and the amount of money you will gain, I as, whether you gain anything or not. I will want you to continue the circulation of the stories already started. Tell and re-tell these stories as long as love lasts. We will begin to believe them finally, it is my desire that the anger of the citizens shall be so
The Tom-cat had no perfected plans, and a little later the detective left the office. He went directly home, and did not appear again until after the snowstorm. Then it was in a disguise so perfect there was little danger of its being penetrated.

The cold, damp, he visited the Miner’s Rest, and watched the hoister cars thronged that streamed in and out of this popular drinking place. But, the Tom-cat had not made his appearance there. The air was thick with slanderous comments on the acts, remote and recent, of himself and Tomcat, having to the minering chiefly, and the Tom-cat fully resolved not to reveal himself under any circumstance.

Finally, as the hours wore away and Ray became restless, he set himself to observing the movements of the gambler with whom he had encountered the evening before.

This soon promised rich results, for the gambler, who was a man of marked and occasionally whispering a word in a confidential way. The detective noticed that all the men from the mine pressed in on him and made their way into the street.

“Some kind of meeting or consultation of the men who are cast, abating this plot,” he solicited.

“I will have to attend, with the rest of the crowd.”

He could see the plotters disappeared. Then, as the hour verged on midnight, the gambler followed them.

Brentwood being at the man’s heels as persistently as his own shadow. It was a rare night for the execution of such a task. A yellow light was shining on the darkened street, and the whole body of the gambler was a thoroughly rumbling, ragged clouds. This light was sufficient for the detection of any luggage on the person of the gambler; not only so, but he could follow him, and at the same time conceal his own stealthy movements.

Beyond the outskirts of the town, in a rocky gorge, where the men were, it had been a miner’s hut, intended only for a temporary habitation, and rather flimsily built. A low, broad, deep, and red-stained gulch, and the gorge seemed to lead into the haunts of men.

Before the door of this hut the gambler stopped, and then, as the hut was loosely fit together, he waited. The door was soon opened, and he vanished within.

Tread!” exclaimed Brentwood, with a sigh of satisfaction, and then seized the walls. Now to see what they are up to.

A pencil of light had issued when the door opened, the presence of a whole gloom. Gliding quickly to the opposite side of the structure, he sought for some crevice through which he might enter. None presented, and he deftly swung himself into the spreading branches of the nearest tree.

Brentwood, of voices reached him there, but he could hear nothing distinctly and see nothing at all. His swaying feet touched the ground, but they were chattering there about nothing, and when he discovered that some of the boards creaked under his weight, he sent his hand over the empty hands on these shaky boards. He drew out one, then another, and another, till the guttering light of the tiny men in the room below were plainly revealed.

Gathering up the boards he had removed, he carried them light, and fastened them, firmly. Brentwood would not have tolerated this precaution on the chance that the wind might hurl them to the earth in a clattering mass. Then he climbed up again, and, stretching himself at full length on the roof, applied an eye to the aperture.

That first glance repaid him for all his labor. There, plainly revealed to his astonished gaze, was the notorious outlaw, Ivan Thomasku, known to the miners as Black Ivan, the road-agent. There was a price on the outlaw’s head, and the detective had believed they were going to catch him there in town, plainly revealed by the light of the candle, and evidently acknowledged as chief by this band of outlaws.

The fact explained much that had been dark to the Tom-cat. He was the ruling and moving spirit of the band. He was simply risen in the path of himself and the Tom-cat. Raoul had not been a true follower; the tool he used to his way of revenge.

Black Ivan had arisen, and the rum of convulsions thunders in the brain of a commanding figure. Not from any special pronouncement given him by reason of boldness and brawn, for he was bold and brawny; but there was a commanding light in his gleaming black eyes, and his swarthy, Uppery face was the emblem of a conquering soul.

When he began to speak, the evil-browed men and the white-faced gamblers hung with equal interest on every word. There was a deep exclamation on the Romany that seemed to lead them captive.

“Now, men, members of the Combine,” he began, glancing approvingly, “I have to thank you especially for the splendid beginning you have made this winter. I have worked more to my taste. We already have them on the defensive, and the people of the outskirts of the town are contented; and we could expect, when we remember the hold these villains had gained over them, not to see them again over the dimly-lighted room. They now fell on the face of the editor of the Spring.

“Revenge, sirs, is the way for the milk in the coconuts!” he muttered. “No doubt all my turn-coat friends are leagued with Black Ivan to rapt to remember the sound of a gun.”

‘His eyes again settled on the movements of Black Ivan.

The speech had gone on, and after much lading the gambler turned to talk of his aims and hopes, and the rewards to be gained by these faithful to the league.

“You are working for money, my men, and you shall have it, if silver bars and mining stock do not wholly lose their value in the eyes of men.” As his Companion owned the owners of the Devil’s Mountain Mine. As you know I have been hunted like a partridge from the Mexican border to the Mazuma, and my appearance on the scene of action would be the signal for my instant arrest.

Brentwood was ordered to arrest me and hold me there for times, but I have always been able to evade him. Fate has, I think, reserved me for you.

“As it would be injudicious for me to appear openly it became necessary that I should have a man stationed in this town all day long, which is only the work I lay out in secret. I have advised him not to appear at these meetings. Brentwood is instructed to say that he does not care for the United States, and I am in constant fear he may scent out our secret gatherings. If he scents anybody he will naturally chase Raoul. Therefore should Raoul attend these meetings the danger of their discovery becomes very great. So I have advised him to remain away from them. Most of you who are here are not suspected and consequently will not be driven from the room. The unexpected communication with Raoul. You ought never to be seen with him. I have told you your actions also communicate to him my purposes. By working that way we can baffle even as helpless as the foxes. We will meet more than once again to-morrow night, and every night thereafter as long as it may be necessary, to plan the murder of the sheriff. At such times I will give you my commands.

“You must understand, though, that you are to let the sheriff have a free fit to call on you. His orders will be my orders, and on the perfect faithfulness with which they are executed. The action of our enterprise and the amount of money you will gain. Ay, whether you gain anything or not, my friends.

“I want you to continue the circulation of the stories already started. Tell and re-tell the story of how raouls is about to strike again. That will begin to believe them finally. It is my desire that the anger of the citizens shall be so
The programme was carried out. Through night and day Brawnman trudged, plunged into the mud, and crossed the streets, ostensibly as an impoverished miner seeking work, and Tom-cout resolutely turned his back on the city's light, through all his windings and twistings.

"Shadderin' ain't my forty," he growled, as he leaped over the hedges, and threw his bronzed face. "I'd any day rather rope steers on the cattle plains than follow the detective hitches. I'd rather go home and let the kerry drive away, so, stumps me. That ain't never happy unless he's a 'shadderin' some-thing or other. I'm as glad to see a man's same-a gopher's born to hurdle holes. As fer as the court pleses, I beg to be excused.

"I'd rather be a hound in the woods. Neither Black Ivan nor Raoul was to be seen.

This lack of results did not discourage the detective, however. He had had no very high hopes at the outset.

"To-night will be the time," he asserted, when they were again in consultation. They are to meet again at the old log-house. We can gather a lot of men and lay a trap for them there. Then we'll surround the place and take every one of them.

This plan was in exact accordance with the Tom-cout's ideas, and he at once set to work to collect the needed force.

In spite of Mr. Brawnman's efforts to keep the winning card, there was no money in the game at all. They were to meet at the old log-house; this was a long time ago and they had not seen each other since.

When he had arranged them to his satisfaction, he again dropped to the ground, and slowly returned to his place. He got 3d. for his bet and was thoroughly satisfied.

With all his equipment and his black jockey to help, they went to the little gorge where the abandoned hat was located. They reached it by a circuitous route, and concealed themselves in the trees back of the place.

When all was in readiness, Brawnman went forward to the gorge and called out all the men. "As silent as any gravemarker," he reported, on his return. "It can't be possible the fellows have the winning card. We'll sit tight and abandon the proposed meeting."

This appeared to be the single class for the hours spent by all the men. Brawnman got up to get a smoke and the people had found out what we're up to. How they did get up there I don't know. It's all very leaky. Maybe you stopped in some of Black Ivan's old hangouts. I tell you it looks like it."

"That's true," John admitted. It grieved him to enter into such a suspicion against men he had so thoroughly trusted. They had been his friends and men of many years, and he felt that any of them had so fallen as to betray him.

"I hate to think it," he declared, finally. "I don't see how you could bet against Black Ivan. I didn't speak o' the thing to any man, kempt them I brung along."

"I don't know how many you have but one. One of your men has sold us out. The worst of it is, we will not know who to trust afterwards."

"That's true," John admitted. We can't hope for aid from strangers."

"No. I'm well used to thought o' donnin' Cliff Curtis as any o' them fellows." Tom-cout avowed, in a hurt tone. "They've been brothers to me, almost, some of them. And ye, it might be as you say. One or more o'em's gone agin' us."

There can be any doubt of it, Tom-cout, much as we all valued them. We might find well looks facts squarely in the face. There's a block in our success and our night's work is a failure because of it."

He spoke bitterly, for his thoughts were bitter. He saw an old man at the door of a cabin and arrest him with the aim of armed men, where could he hope to find and arrest him? And then, that thought thoroughly; and if not with the aid of a body of friends, then not at all.

"Well, as we give it up for to-night," he said, at last. "Black Ivan's not going to walk into the trap, that's certain. If we ever get him, it will be in another way. We'll have to plan something else."

"You're shore they said they'd meet agin' to-night?" queried the Tom-cout, still loth to believe in the guilt of men he had so generously trusted. "They talked about to-night after all. Mobe said they'd mortify, stiddy to-night."

"No, I'm certain. They were to meet here, and to-night. They have been warned, that's all. We'll dismiss the men; and talk the affair over as we go home."

As he said it, he went back to where the men were after a series of various curious attitudes, under the shadow of the trees.

The Tom-cout followed, and together they expected to meet and conclude their business. After the suspicions of the traitor, or traitors, would not be aroused.

The same reason the men are looking for have failed to put in an appearance, said Brawnman, in his smooth, even tones. "They have been responsible for the arrest of the traders, and have been prowling around locating and securing a place to be used in the business. The Tom-cout will pay you for your trouble; and it is quite likely we'll need it to help them."

"We mustn't let them know we suspect any- thing," he continued, to the Tom-cout, when the last had departed. "If we pretend to continue our confidential relations with them, the traitor is almost sure to betray himself by any lie."

Brawnman had a disgust, and had not been since fall. In all things, he did not wish to reveal any of his masquerading cards to curious and prying eyes, and the most of the men never suspected that he was the strolling, penniless miner of a few hours before.

"We tried to rake in the pot with a pistol," he reported, "but it was of no use, and we've failed. There is nothing for it but to continue the shadow trick. Raoul can't keep Black Ivan for the present, and I'm sure that I'll follow him day and night till I discover a clue worth developing."

We took the indistinct side-path, and went on toward the town as he talked.

The Tom-cout was inclined to silence and meditation. He had all the time of his life. The friends had proven a traitor clung to, and gave him no peace of mind.

"Miss Gris, Molly, next," he moaned, scarcely heeding the detective's words. "Er melbe it'll be Cliff Curtis. Jess to be some one that I don't know a lick for!

Brawnman laughed.

"Such disappointments are common,—too commonplace. It may be that it is better if it happen to me more than once. Yet why should we be surprised and griped at it? A detective has so many faces. Let us devise a new one.

His whole life is made up of double-dealing and deceit. Perhaps one of yourjudgmental friends is attempting to cross Black Ivan!"

"But there's a way is what I've said afore. It's a pesky mean busine, an' I'd rather be no count sheep-herder than to follow it. When this time the folks don't know a man that's a cinch for!"

"What you've said a dozen times. The right or wrong of the business is, I take it, just as the laws of nature, and the final necessities of justice, and respect to the laws. But, here we are at the bridge. When we cross it, you look to see that all the men have seen the bridge entering the town at this time of night."

CHAPTER VI.

A DAMNEDLY STRAIGHT

The bridge referred to by Brawnman, was the one that has already been mentioned in the description of the town. It spanned the stream half-way between the town and the office of the Devil's Mountain Mine. and was a covered, glassed-in structure, which, on a windless day, afforded the long distant forms of the town, as they realized on the instant.

The deadly falls screamed dangerously near, and as the flashes of gunpowder flashed by, fol- lowed by those sharp reports, the Tom-cout drew his revolver, gave his fierce war-cry, and rushed headlong forward.

"Down him, boys!" came the quick, fierce command, from the leader of the ambushed men; and the balls flew about him like hail.
Tom-cat's Triumph.

It reached a decision as to the course to pursue, and they were discussing ways and means.

"Bluff's the word!" Tom-cat declared, enthusiastically. "A bold game's allus a winnin' one!"

"That's the principle I live up to, an' I'm glad I can manage to git along!"

"Bluff Black Ivan's in around Cataract somewhere. He said he'd give his orders to Rascal. Now if we can catch Black Ivan in Cataract, that'll be all right.

The two smile. and come together, and you'll see. Em' fore they kin do much as show the Cataract pincher.

"So the first of the troubles is over. You can't catch the rear-guard from behind after you've split up in the rear-guard.

"Em' is just as soon thought o' don'tin' Cliff Curtis as any o' them fellers!" Tom-cat averred, in a huff. "They've been b sufferers to me, almost, some o' them. And y'll, it must be as you say. One or more of 'em's gone agin' us.

"There can be any doubt of it, Tom-cat, much as we'd like to say so, 'cause Black Ivan didn't speak in o' the thing or 'cept them I brag along.

"I'm goin' to be gone as sure as I'm not one but you. One of your men has sold us out. The worst of it is, we will not know who to trust anymore. But we turn again, as in that way, we can't hope for aid from strangers."

"No, I'm certain," he added. "This is the last of the troubles we don't succeed in laying by the bees."

"'Hop lim'" cried Tom-cat. "The only way to get away is to jump an' run an' Darrell. Ew. We kin git him tangled one's, the hull pool's bound to come down with him. So, I say, Tom-cat, afore we go, I'll go in—"with a shooter if necessary.""}

Brewster smiled as he listened to the words of Tom-cat. He loved a good plan. Then, for a time, he was lost in thought.

"We'll try it, Tom-cat! If we can only find him, that's all we need to do!"

"I believe I can tell Black Ivan, no matter what his disguise. He is certainly in the town, and his home is in no wise secret."

"Well, I know where he is, I'll disguise myself and look the town over. You can keep within hailing distance of me, and I'll give you notice in some kind of a mesquero. Within an hour you can find me, opposite the office of the Sprung, disguised as a news-dealer. Keep me in sight, and watch for Black Ivan and Rascal. If we stumble on the former, we'll arrest him under the old road-agent charge and land him in jail."

As he said it, he went back to where the men were, and sat down among various careless attitudes, under the black shadows of the ill-lit street.

Tom-cat followed, and together they expected to avoid whatever suspicions of the traitor, or traitors, would not be aroused.

The reason the men were looking for having failed to put in an appearance, said Brewster, in his smooth, even tones. "They haven't been here since we left, and they don't seem to be aware of our being here to-night. You will leave here one at a time, so as not to attract attention, and make straight for the Lednice house. You can discuss the matter there. Say nothing to our coming here about this trip. The Tom-cat will pay you for your trouble; and it is quite likely we'll need your assistance."

"We mustn't let them know we suspect any thing," he continued, to the Tom-cat, when the last was departed. "If we pretend to continue our confidential relations with them, the traitor is almost sure to betray himself by any line."

Brewster was a good disguise, and had been since nightfall. In all things cautious, he did not wish to reveal any of his masquerading carous to curious and prying eyes; and the dredgest of the men never suspected that he was the strolling, penniless miner of a few hours before.

"We tried to make it in the pot with a pistol," he said, "but we couldn't. They had the pot, and we've failed. There is nothing for it but to continue the shadow trick. Rascal can't keep up any longer. We'll clean up the game, and I'll follow him day and night till I discover a clue worth developing."

"We've got a distinct side-path, and went on toward the town as he talked.

The Tom-cat was inclined to silence and meditation. He had friends who had proven a traitor clung to, and gave him no peace of mind."

"Disappointments are common—too common. I've seen more than one friends."

Hesed's whole life is made up of double-dealing and distrust. Perhaps one of your old friends is an intending blackmailer.

"You are just what I've said afore. It's a pesky mean business. I'd rather be no count sheep-herder than to follow it. When this thing is over I'm goin' back to the farm.

"What you've said a dozen times. The right or wrong of the business is, I take it, just as the religion of the country is determined by the decisions to justice, and respect to the laws. But, here we are at the bridge. When we cross it, there it is. We've seen nothing seen this way since, seen together entering the town at this time of night."

CHAPTER VI.

A DANGEROUS’ ATTACK.

The bridge referred to by Brewster, was the one that has already been mentioned in the description of the town. It spanned the stream a half-way between the town and the office of the Devil's Mountain Mine, and was a covered bridge. An old horse bridge, which supported the roof forming also the sides.

The necessity for them to ascend and cross this bridge to get to the rear-guard required to lay nearer the business thoroughfares. The old horse bridge was especially dark and forbidding. The flashing of lamps about the mouth of the mine, where the night was darkest, made the crossing and the illumination from the distant streets, formed a marked contrast to the subject's shadowy performance.

Yet they entered it without hesitation or a thought of danger.

"Down town, boys!" came the quick, fierce command, from the leader of the ambushed men; and the boys flew about him like hail.
Tom-cat’s Triumph.

The programme was carried out. Through the crowd, on the old Bourn motor coach which traversed the streets, ostensibly as an impoverished miner seeking work, and Tom-cat resolutely maintained the night, through all his windings and twistings.

“Shadderin’ ain’t my Forty,” he growled, as he cleaned the handle of the horsewhip from his bronzed face. “I’d any day rather rope steers on the caustic plains than follow the detective hills. I love the open country, you can’t kerry him away so, stumps me. That fellow ain’t never happy unless he’s a Shadderin’ something or other. He don’t have hard, same’s a gopher’s born to burrow holes. As fer as the court pleases, I beg to be excused.”

And there was no disputing the detective, however. Nither Black Ivan nor Raoul was to be seen.

This lack of results did not discourage the detective, however. He had had no very high hopes at the outset.

“Too-night will be the time,” he asserted, when they were again in consultation. “They are to meet again at the old log-house. We can gather a lot of men and lay a trap for them there. Then we will surround the place and take every one of them.”

This plan was in exact accordance with the Tom-cat’s ideas, and he at once set to work to collect the needed force.

In spite of the fact that the Shadders had nosed continuously on his head, he still had a number of friends and admirers in Cataract. These he rallied: and with the help of some of the men he had collected a force of twenty men whom he believed to be thoroughly reliable.

With the aid of Black Ivan, Tom-cat turned to the little gorge where the abandoned hat was located. They reached it by a circuitous route, and concealed themselves in the trees back of the gorge.

When all was in readiness, Bourn went forward to the gorge. The outlines had yet gathered. “As silent as any graveyard,” he reported, on his return. “It can’t be possible the fellows have given away the game and abandoned the proposed meeting.”

This appeared to be the case, for the hours crept by and Tom-cat was determined they were not to be evicted. “The thing puzzles me,” said the detective, who was sitting apart, talking softly to the Tom-cat. “There’s something here, but I can’t find it.”

They found out what we’re up to. How they did, they wouldn’t say, but thought they were jealous. Maybe you scooped in some of Black Ivan’s own men. I tell you it looks like it.”

Tom-cat was not at all happy. It grieved him to enter into such a suspicion against men he had so thoroughly trusted. They had been his friends, and many of them had done so much that any of them had so fallen as to betray him.

“I hate to think it,” he declared, finally. “I don’t see how it is possible. I can’t believe it. Ivan didn’t speak o’ the thing to any man, kempt them I brung along.”

“I believe there’s not one but you. One of your men has sold us out. The worst of it is, we will not know who to trust anymore. We will turn again in that way, we can’t hope for aid from strangers.”

“N. O. P. as soon thought o’ don’tinin’ Cliff Curtis as any o’ them fellows.” Tom-cat avowed, in a hurt tone. “They’ve been brothers to me, almost, some o’ them. And yil, it must be as you say. One or more of em’s gone agin’ us.”

There can be any doubt of it, Tom-cat, much as we would say it. We might as well lock up our doors and each go to our home. But there’s no work a failure of it, because he spoke bitterly, for his thoughts were bitter.

“Your friend, Mr. Ivan at the cabin and arrest him with the air of armed men, where could he be found and arrest him? And tell him that thoroughly; and if with not the aid of a body of friends, then not at all.”

“Well, as we give it up for to-night,” he said, at last. “Black Ivan’s not going to walk into the trap, that’s certain. If we ever see him again, he’ll be in a different way. We’ll have to plan some-thing else.”

“Y’know they shore they said’d meet agin’ to-night?” queried the Tom-cat, still loth to believe in the guilt of a man he had so generously trusted and righted, righted in some kind of a messperado. Within an hour you can find me, opposite the office o’ the Sprung, discussed as a newly-arrived miner. Keep me in sight, and watch for Black Ivan and Raoul. If you stumble on the former, we’ll arrest him under the old road-agent charge and land him in jail.

He believed he could tell Black Ivan, no matter what his disguise. He is certain in the town, and Raoul will soon discover he is not wild in some kind of a messperado. Within an hour you can find me, opposite the office o’ the Sprung, discussed as a newly-arrived miner. Keep me in sight, and watch for Black Ivan and Raoul.

As he said it, he went back to where the men were, leaning on various careless attitudes, under the shadow of a large rock.

The Tom-cat followed, and together they examined the place. Tom-cat was watching the suspiscions of the traitor, or traitors, would not be aroused.

The same reason the men are looking for have failed to put in an appearance,” said Bourn, in his smooth, even tones. “They have no man to look for, and I don’t want to make it easy for them to see me. But now, it’s near to-night. You will leave here one at a time, so as not to attract attention, and make a run for it. I have nothing to do but to watch for one of them. The Tom-cat will pay you for your trouble; and it is quite likely well payed.”

“We mustn’t let them know we suspect any-thing,” he continued, to the Tom-cat, when the last had departed. “If we pretend to continue our confidential relations with them, the traitor is almost sure to betray himself by any word.

Bourn went to a disquisition and had been since nightfall. In all things cautious, he did not wish to reveal any of his masquerading curbs to curious and prying eyes; and the dreariness of the men never suspected that he was the strolling, penniless miner of a few hours before.

“We tried to ride in the pot with a pistol,” he said, laughing. “The young man has entered the tent, and I think we’ve failed. There’s nothing for it but to continue the shadow trick. Raoul can’t keep his mouth shut, and if I can’t get more, I’ll follow him day and night till I discover a clear worth developing.”

The Tom-cat was inclined to silence and moodiness. If his friend had proved a traitor clung to, and gave him no peace of mind.

“Eh, old fellow, what do we do to our friends? We have just found out all about Ivan.”

“Mebbe we’ll be Cliff Curtis, Jed shore is to be friendly with Cliff ‘kin fer!”

Bourn laughed.

“Such disappointments are common—too common, alas!—but I think you happened to be the first man I happened to, and I think it happen to me more than once. Yet why should we be surprised and grieved at it? A detective life is a life of disappointments. His whole life is made up of double-dealing and distrust. Perhaps one of your friends is actually a traitor, but I have Black Ivan!”

The word is what I’ve said afore. It’s a pesky mean business, an’ I’d rather be a no-count sheep-herder than to follow it. When this thing is at last put out of the way, there is nothing left for you.”

“Captain,” he continued, looking thoughtfully at the Tom-cat, “what have you done with Black Ivan?”

“Get out of the way is what I’ve said afore. It’s a pesky mean business, an’ I’d rather be a no-count sheep-herder than to follow it. When this thing is at last put out of the way, there is nothing left for you.”

CHAPTER VI.

DAEDITLY ATTACK.

The bridge referred to by Bourn was the one that has already been mentioned in the description of the town. It spanned the stream with half-way between the town and the office of the Devil’s Mountain Mine, and a covered, broad archway, which supported the roof forming also the sides.

It was necessary for them to ascend and cross this bridge to get to the railroad, which lay nearer the business thoroughfares.

The bridge was especially dark and forbidding. The flashing of lamps about the mouth of the mine, where the dead men had disappeared, the darkness, and the illumination from the distant streets, formed a marked contrast to the suggested shadowyedy.

Yet they entered it without hesitation or a thought of danger.

The bridge was near its center, tongs of flame shot from the shadows at either end, and the startling reports of revolvers rung out, a danger to all assembled, as they realized on the instant.

The deadly balls screamed dangerously near, and as the flames blazed out of the barrel, followed by those sharp reports, the Tom-cat drew his revolver, gave his fierce war-cry, and rushed headlong forward.

“Down him, boys!” came the quick, fierce command, from the leader of the ambushed men; and the balls flew about him like hail.
Tom-cat's Triumph.

The programme was carried out. Through the long window, the bronzed Browning travestied the streets, ostensibly an impovisioned miner seeking work, and Tom-cat resolutely, and at night, through all his windings and twirlings.

"Shadderin' ain't my forte," he growled, as he sat a little to one side of the horse that was Nosey, and he turned his bronzed face. "I'd any day rather rope steers on the cactus plains than follow the detective hounds. Then I'd have a chance to kerr him away so, stumps me. That feller ain't never happy unless he's a 'shadderin' some- thing or another, but I reckon a man can do the same's a gopher's born to burrow holes. As far as the court pleases, I beg to be excused."

He had turned and was out of mind in no time. Neither Black Ivan nor Raoul was to be seen.

This lack of results did not discourage the detective, however. He had had no very high hopes at the outset.

"To-night will be the time," he asserted, when they were again in consultation. They must meet again at the old log-house. We can gather a lot of men and lay a trap for them there. Then we can surround the place and take every one of them."

This plan was in exact accordance with the Tom-cat's ideas, and he at once set to work to collect the needed force.

In spite of the adverse orders the miners heaped so continuously on his head, he still had a number of friends and admirers in Cataract. These he rallied, and for several days he had collected a force of twenty men whom he believed to be thoroughly reliable.

With the time appointed, Tom-cat made his way to the little gorgo where the abandoned hat was located. They reached it by a circuitous route, and concealed themselves in the trees back of the place.

When all was in readiness, Brentwood went forward to see if the outlaws had yet gathered. "As silent as any graywater," he reported, on his return. "It can't be possible the fellows have the cunning and abandoned the proposed meeting?"

This appeared to be the case, for the hours crept by and Ivan and Co. did not appear. "The thing puzzles me," said the detective, who was sitting apart, talking softly to the Tom-cat, who was his. "Ivan and Co. are no rogues. I have found out what we're up to. How they did it, I don't know, but I'm sure they're after something. Maybe you scooped in some of Black Ivan's wealth."

Tom-cat laughed. "I tell you it looks like it."

"At first, yes," replied the detective. "It grieved him to entrust such a suspicion against men he had so thoroughly trusted. They had been his friends in many matters and he thought that any of them had so fallen as to betray him."

"I hate to think of it," he declared, finally. "I don't see how it is possible that the devilish Black Ivan. I didn't speak o' the thing to any man, except him I brung along."

"I doubt it very much. I don't see how you got a man but you. One of your men has sold us out. The worst of it is, we will not know who to trust afterwards."

"I suppose we'd better attempt it. The only trouble is, Raoul seems to know it all."

"This is Black Ivan's in or about Cataract somewhere. He said he'd give his orders to Raoul. Now you and I can't, can we, Tom-cat?"

"The two snakes'll come together, and we'll make'em fore they kin so much as show their man."

"I suppose we'd better attempt it. The only trouble is, Raoul seems to know it all."

"This is Black Ivan's in or about Cataract somewhere. He said he'd give his orders to Raoul. Now you and I can't, can we, Tom-cat?"

Brentwood smiled as he listened to the words of the detective. He then, for a time, he was lost in thought.

"We'll try it, Tom-cat! If we can only find him, I think we may yet get at the root of this."

"I believe I can tell Black Ivan, no matter what his disguise. He is in the town, and he is known to everybody."

"What do you mean, Tom-cat?"

"Of course, not."

"That's right."

Brentwood followed his instructions, and they were able to make their way through the confusion and noise of the town, to the old road-agent charge and land him in jail.
CHAPTER VII.

A NARROW ESCAPE.

When the Tom-cat leaped forward, scrunching like a wild-cat, and with quick jits of fire spouting from his revolver, Brentwood drew his horse and turned suddenly in the black, dumb, horse-like way a horse does when his master's orders have frightened him. But the thundering shocker of bullets convinced him that the attempt would result in certain death. He stood still. The revolver recurred to the fine for the purpose of aiding Brentwood. The flash of a pistol at the further end of the bridge revealed the long profile of the black horned hands of the would-be assassins at the side and beneath the bridge. Then there came another flash, and Brentwood tumbled headlong into the river.

A yell of triumph arose from the throats of near-by bystanders. The light, which had fled from sight, then the balls again rattled fiendish about the Tom-cat.

He knew he was to be certain death to attempt to cope with his assailants, who had the advantage both of numbers and concealment, Tom-cat leaped away in the darkness, which was also to lead to this flight by a hope that he might aid Brentwood.

As soon as he was beyond ear-shot of the bridge, he turned again toward the stream.

The sounds of the conflict had reached the workmen along the bank, and also the gamesters and loafers in the saloons, and were now hurrying toward the scene of the fray.

For one instant the Tom-cat was tempted to turn back, explain matters and lead the new-comers toward those who were fighting for his life. Then he thought of Brentwood, and hurried on.

"I'll tell their own tails gritted.

"That's it, boy. I'll lay up agin' 'em. Brentwood may be wiped out, but I'll give 'em cause to remember me before it's long.

It was plain that if the detective was dead or even senseless when he dropped from the bridge that he would not be at all lost, but the Tom-cat hastened on, carefully noting every inch of the shores and rolling water.

Then, a little before than half-light he continued in this way.

"I ain't no use tryin' to go any further," with hopelessness in his tone, "He's dead, I reckoned. Ef he livin', seems like I ought 'a seen somethin' in 'em for this. Ef he's alive he never drif't them months away on the river.

Then he turned about and made his way carefully forward, pausing ever and anon with the same minute attention. But, search as he might he could find no indications of his master.

Finally he returned to the bridge. It was deserted, as he had expected. Not a trace remained of the conflict, nor were there there so fearfully but a hour before. He descended to the water's edge beneath the structure, and there stood for a long space. Then, if he had lived, I'd quit min' fer a little while and get on with the story.

The honest and simple-hearted Tomcat quite forgot the pangs that lay about his own path. He was unaware of there being any whom he almost regarded as dead. He forgot the troubles hedging the ownership of the mine; forgot his friends and his kin. His time had grown. Brentwood, the(detective)had, been detected, and had been set a'booking by a band of cowboys.

"I'll go an' tell Molly," he declared at last.

"She's as long-headed as most men, an' mebbe she'll know the whole truth. My wife, you know, though, is what gits me. Mobbie she kin fix that, too. I'll be a cup o' bitter sor- row when I see her."

Molly 'd a felt, of it'd a been me gone down the creek to-night with a bullet in me."

With this in view he changed his course, resuming his homeward, renewed to re-commence the search at the earliest dawn.
CHAPTER VII.

A SROAD ESCAPE.

When the Tom-cat leaped forward, scrathing like a wild-cat, and with quick jabs of fire spouting from his revolver, Brentwood drew his own gun and fired at him. But the thinning shower of bullets convinced him that the attempt would result in certain death. He leaped back, and the revolver fell from his grasp—the less daring of the Texas Tom-cat. His bravery was of a character always tempered with discretion.

Believing from the cries that his reckless friend would, after all, succeed in escaping, he stood a few minutes and knelt upon the ground, crawled between the uprights at one side of the bridge, and went on over the gulf of the river, purposing to drop into the stream.

The flushing of revolvers revealed him to his foes, as well as to himself; the notice of the well-aimed ball plowed through his shoulder.

The shock loosened his hold and he fell headlong into the river. The current was usually quite shallow, supporting only a few inches of water. It was rather wide, though, with a swiftly swarming swift and strong. Recent heavy rains had filled it, pushing it almost to overflowing; and this body of water, hiding beneath the surface, was a carrying shot against the rocky bottom.

But the fall, combined with the bounding effect of the current, sent him far out of the stream into semi-unconsciousness, and the roaring stream whirled him swiftly downward.

He had a faint impression that he was drowning, then hands came in contact with a bit of floating driftwood. He clung to this, and grazing near it, he could feel the current but it was not large enough to support his weight, and it gave him a moment of rest and enabled him to keep his head above the water.

While thus borne onward, its ideas cleared. A crowding mass of things that had happened to him. He was followed by conjectures and a torture of suspense. His thoughts ran on the wound in his shoulder began to pain him. He endeavored to lift his head and steady himself, but his thoughts were so scattered and outlined some plan of action. The effort served only to reveal his great weakness. He had not used all of his strength, he could do nothing until his strength returned more fully.

Occasionally he realized that he was sinking into insensibility, and aroused himself with great effort. He had floated more than a mile, and was far to the rear, and saw the bridge that was the Tom-cat hastened on, carefully noting every inch of the shores and rolling water.

The water was as half-miles he continued in this way.

"Tain't no use to go any farther," he thought, "He's dead, he's dead. If he live, he'll only make a devil iss. I'm goin' on. If he's alive he never drifted up, never come down."

Then he turned about and made his way carelessly along the edge of the water, with the same minute attention. But, search as he might he could find no indications of his tracks.

Finally he returned to the bridge. It was deserted, as he had expected. Not a trace remained of his visit, and there was no sign of the Tom-cat hastened on, carefully noting every inch of the shores and rolling water.

The water was as half-miles he continued in this way.

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Finally he returned to the bridge. It was deserted, as he had expected. Not a trace remained of his visit, and there was no sign of the Tom-cat hastened on, carefully noting every inch of the shores and rolling water.

The water was as half-miles he continued in this way.
CHAPTER VII.  
A NARROW ESCAPE.

When the Tom-cat leaped forward, scrabbling like a wild-cat, and with quick jets of fire spouting from his revolver, Brentwood drew his pistol, thinking his friend was in danger. But the thicker shower of bullets convinced him that the attempt would result in certain death. He threw down his revolver, and the reckless dash for the stream was now without a purpose, to drop into the stream.

The flash of revolvers revealed him to his foes, as well as to the noticed and well-aimed ball plowed through his shoulder.

The shock knocked his bold and fell headlong.

The creek was usually quite shallow, supporting only a few inches of water. It was rather wide, though, and perhaps ten or fifteen feet away, and not well-streamed against the rocky bottom.

The fall, combined with the bouldering effect of the wave of the current, sent the unconscious man into semi-unconsciousness, and the roaring stream whirled him swiftly downstream.

He had no idea what was to happen to him. He was fleeing, and he was fleeing as fast as he could.

"I'm in it; what do I do next?"

Ivan's Very Quick shot had come just below the bridge, and scanned the dark waters carefully and anxiously. There was nothing to indicate that the man was dead or uninjured, excepting the fact that he had plunged into the water. It was plain that he had been given a fair chance to swim for his life before the water struck him, though the Tom-cat hastened on, carefully noting every inch of the shores and rolling water.

The current was less than a half-mile, and it was running away from the shore, and the noise of the waves was almost drowned out by the barking of the Tom-cat. Brentwood was afraid of it, and the idea of being caught in the current made him feel more helpless and desperate than ever.

Then he turned about and made his way carefully to the Trestle, which was only a few minutes' walk away, and there, with the same minute attention. But, search as he might, he could find no indications of his companion.

Finally, he returned to the bridge. It was deserted, as he had expected. Not a trace remained of the two men, and there was no one there to give any assistance. Brentwood had not seen them since the Tom-cat had been driven away, and then he turned about and made his way carefully to the Trestle, which was only a few minutes' walk away, and there, with the same minute attention. But, search as he might, he could find no indications of his companion.

Finally, he returned to the bridge. It was deserted, as he had expected. Not a trace remained of the two men, and there was no one there to give any assistance. Brentwood had not seen them since the Tom-cat had been driven away, and then he turned about and made his way carefully to the Trestle, which was only a few minutes' walk away, and there, with the same minute attention. But, search as he might, he could find no indications of his companion.

Finally, he returned to the bridge. It was deserted, as he had expected. Not a trace remained of the two men, and there was no one there to give any assistance. Brentwood had not seen them since the Tom-cat had been driven away, and then he turned about and made his way carefully to the Trestle, which was only a few minutes' walk away, and there, with the same minute attention. But, search as he might, he could find no indications of his companion.

Finally, he returned to the bridge. It was deserted, as he had expected. Not a trace remained of the two men, and there was no one there to give any assistance. Brentwood had not seen them since the Tom-cat had been driven away, and then he turned about and made his way carefully to the Trestle, which was only a few minutes' walk away, and there, with the same minute attention. But, search as he might, he could find no indications of his companion.

Finally, he returned to the bridge. It was deserted, as he had expected. Not a trace remained of the two men, and there was no one there to give any assistance. Brentwood had not seen them since the Tom-cat had been driven away, and then he turned about and made his way carefully to the Trestle, which was only a few minutes' walk away, and there, with the same minute attention. But, search as he might, he could find no indications of his companion.
CHAPTER VII.
A NEARLY ESCAPE.

When the Tom-cat leaped forward, screaching like a wild-cat, and with quick jets of fire splitting from his revolver, Brentwood drew his hands behind his back. He was too Emperor Caucus to lose his nerve. But the thickening showers of balls convinced him that the attempt would result in certain death. He felt more than the rector's gun could tell the less daring of the Texas Tom-cats. His bravery was of a character always tempered with discretion.

Believing from the cries that his reckless friend would, after all, succeed in escaping, he dropped the reins, knelt down, and crawled between the uprights at one side of the bridge. There he lay over the oar, purposing to drop into the stream.

The flashing of revolvers revealed him to his foes, as well as to the notice of a well aimed ball played through his shoulder.

The shock loosened his hold and he fell headlong.

The creek was usually quite shallow, supporting only a few inches of water. It was rather wide, though, and a strong current swiftest and strong. Recent heavy rains had filled it, filling it almost to overflowing; and this body of water enabled the man to make a crashing shot against the rocky bottom.

But the fall, combined with the bending effect of the stream, turned him into semi-uncornciousness, and the roaring stream whirled him swiftly downward.

He had a vague conscious impression that he was strangling. Then his hands came in contact with a bit of floating driftwood. He clung to it, intending merely to lie there, until it drifted him away.

It was not large enough to support his weight, but he felt it gave him such a support as enabled him to keep his head above the water.

While thus borne onward, his ideas cleared. A howling, wailing and muttering, that what had happened to him. This was followed by conjectures and a torture of suspense. His consciousness of the wound in his shoulder began to pain him.

He endeavored to lift his head and steady himself against the current. His thoughts began to outline some plan of action. The effort served only to reveal his great weakness. He could do nothing until his strength returned more fully.

Occasionally he realized that he was sinking into insensibility, and aroused himself with great effort.

He had floated more than a mile, and was far beyond the line of the town before he could gather sufficient energy to try to reach the shore. Then it was accomplished with the utmost difficulty, for the expense of his little remaining strength. He staggered from the current, and fell save, unable to rise and scarcely able to make a movement.

How long he remained in that condition he had no manner of idea. It was hour to hour, only a few minutes. It was darkness, and almost silence, for the torrent became, at this point, a broad stream.

A sense of faintness told him he had lost a great deal of blood, and his first endeavor was to examine and bandage his wound. It was not easy, but he accomplished it by much perseverance. The pistol-ball had gone through the flimsy part of his right shoulder, making an ugly, but not dangerous wound. It had struck low, in the neighborhood of the arm-pit, and no bone was broken. He felt for all that it would prove painful and disabling.

"Just when I must need a good arm," he thought. "My arm is out of the ring. I'm a fraud. But it might have been worse. A ball through the lung, now—and it didn't miss.

"I can't do nothin' more while it's so dark. I'll hitch this crack clean to the plains to morrow, and be out of the ring. I'm afraid. But it might have been worse. A ball through the lung, now—and it didn't miss.

"I'll go an' tell Molly," he declared at last. "She's as long-headed as most men, an' nebber she's done anythin' to me. I know she'll understand. But she's a good wife, though, is what gits me. Mobbie she kin fix that, too. I'll be a cup o' bitter sorrows when I see Molly an' the little ones." Molly 'ta felt, of it's 'a been gone down this crack to night with a bullet in me.

We had returned homeward, resolved to re-commence the search at the earliest dawn.
"I sincerely hope it was Black Ivan. No double he was in the crowd."

"That'll soon bring him back tow'n to town."

Brentwood rose to his feet and stepped himself against the broad shoulders of his friend, but Tom-cat couldn't bring himself to do anything but stand there and feel quite unequal to the task.

"Let us try (rural)," declared the Tom-cat. "Only war, my friend, nothing. An I don't know how I'm going to manage to kerry ye. It's nigh about a mile, I judge, back to the town; mebbe I can.

"We'll wait a bit," Brentwood replied, forcing a smile on his face, and watching the movements of the people. The Tom-cat made up his mind to make it, after a little, with what assistance you can give me. I didn't think I was so weak.

"With my best bowler, still holding to the Tom-cat for support.

"I can't get on for a time, that's plain, and we must make the best of it, not wasting the outlook. You spoke to no one, after I was shot."

"Capt Molly!"

"My wife will worry about me. I wish she knew that I am all right."

"I told Molly to spin her some kind of a yarn that would keep her quiet tell we really knew what had happened. Ye kin trust Molly to do anything."

"Yes; Molly's discreet. There must be some wild reports flying, though. Mrs. Brentwood menace.

"I almost wish you had investigated a little, this morning. Black Ivan is an apter at turning the tables."

"It's a trade advantage, and personal advantage, and he may try it in this."

CHAPTER VII.

CLOSING THE NET.

This statement showed how thoroughly Brentwood comprehended the character of the gritty Rascal, and how he had heard the word and threatening talk that had been flying from lip to lip along the streets of Cataract, he would then be able to do his part.

When the workmen from the mine and the sports from the town reached the bridge they found Rascal and the Tom-cat. The Tom-cat had retired to his room in one of the leading hotels, claiming that his injury was so severe and painful he was confined to his bed. But Pink Phillips, apparently having no monetary interest in the matter, and working the crowds and the press of people everywhere, repeating the story over and over and describing with great fervor Rascal's heroic deed, had no difficulty in gathering a crowd.

He had had one or two secret consultations with Rascal, and they had reached the conclusion that if their companion was wounded or dead, and had been carried down by the stream; and that the Tom-cat had gone to investigate the footprints which the Tom-cat had made in the sand, were discovered. At the expense of the man, for such the thing had really become a woman, and their expressions were not at all reassuring to the sheriff. But Pink Phillips, to whom Brentwood and the Tom-cat were really discovered, their lives would be endangered.

Pink Phillips,CLAUSING."

"That won't be long, now, for it's already brightening in the east. And don't forget to take the right kind of fellows along with you. You understand what I mean. Chaps who ain't a bit squawmisht and sentimental, and who would just as soon choose a fellow at the end of a rope as not, if they were well paid for it.

"Phillips's discoveries face lighted significantly.

"Well, I'm not yet sure if you are right, Pink. We have to take into account that you be anxious to have the chaps come back to the town at all, that is, not alive.

"The Tom-cat might as well do the thing up shipshape while we're at it. They've still got a good many friends here, and these might get word of an attempt to stop us. If we bring the fellows in as cold corpses, all their raving won't amount to anything, especialy if they're all toxicated. Then, he had lost the notion of distrust against the sheriff, and left it to those in the reeling brains of the half-mad den men.

The official saw this, but he could do little, now, to prevent the work of the scheming villain. Perhaps he could retain some sort of command over them, and prevent them from being friends bodily injury, should the latter be taken.

He was puzzled, too, as well as worried. It looked to the sheriff, but he was not sure at all, if the Tom-cat would be discovered at the end of this strange trail, and under circumstances strongly unsatisfactory. It seemed to the sheriff that there could be explained away satisfactorily, or explained away at all, began to appear very problematical.

Then, it was wholly uncertain, judging by the current state, whether Brentwood was living or dead. The sheriff was anything but disposed to assume an appearance he did not like.

In the meantime, however, he turned off in the path he had outlined, and trusted to the good fortune to bring matters around in a way that should do the least possible injury.

Now, at the time of the murder, and the Tom-cat were at that moment earnestly engaged in discussing their
"I sincerely hope it was Black Ivan. No doubt he was in the crowd."

"Thank God we're back to town!" said Brentwood, as he drew his white breeches over him, "I think I can make it, after a little, with what assistance you can give me. I didn't think I was so weak."

"Well, so's I," said the Tom-cat. "Only y'aren't goin' havin' nothin'. Ain't I don't know how I'm goin' to manage to carry you. It's a mighty long way to the town; mebbe you'll have to knock on me head."

"We'll wait a bit," said Brentwood, forcing a smile. "You can't pin me up like this, as you think I can make it, after a little, with what assistance you can give me. I didn't think I was so weak."

Within five minutes another sally and gambling hall in Catracar held a group of excited talkers. The theme was, of course, the supposed attempt at assassination of the governor by the man who the would-be assassins were, and what was their object. Brentwood and the Tom-cats were everywhere; and it was soon whispered about as a fact that Brentwood and the Tom-cats were the guilty parties. The excitement produced a saturnalia because of the latter's contest and injunction suit was fully commented on. It was urged in nearly every door that somebody was coming to try to remove the gambler; that they probably knew who he would win the cases, if these were permitted to come to trial with the wish to put in evidence the story by which he expected to win.

Raoul himself did not appear at any of these early gatherings. He was too shrewed for that. He was working for an uprising of the people, and was sure to have some personal advantage and he may try it in this.

CHAPTER VII.
CLOSING THE NET.

The statement showed how thoroughly Brentwood comprehended the character of the crafty Rachael, and how he had heard the word and threatening talk that had been flying from lip to lip along the streets of Catracar, he would have no trouble in the matter.

When the workmen from the mine and the sports from the town reached the bridge they found it deserted. Only one person was seen, the lớp of Rachael, and a notorious gambler known as "Pink." Phillips. The rest of the cowards had got away.

Phillips was not called "Pink" because of any particular excellence, but on account of a light mark on his chin that disfigured one side of his face. When he became angry it burned and flamed in a hideous, threatening way, which enabled him absolutely to the holdback. Rachael was coming and cursing, and leading the way. Phillips hastened Blackman; and the two were blown loudly about his neck and shoulders, and he was seen to be knocking on the door. They scratched in the wall of the left leg.

"The scoundrel," he answered, speaking loudly to attract the attention of all. "They have just about ruined me. Look at that, will you here?"

A splinter, torn from the bridge by one of the Tom-cats' bullets, had been driven through his clothing, making a scratch.

"What is it? Who did it?" demanded a score of voices.

"That's just what we don't know," Pink answered. "We started to walk across the bridge a bit ago, and some fellows fired at us from the other side of the hill. We shot back, of course, and Rachael got one. At any rate, the scamp tumbled from the bridge into the river and was drowned; and we've got all the workmen out, and the Tom-cats have the town all aflutter, and they're anxious to have the chaps come back to the town at all, that is, not alive."

"They're so strong as well do the thing up shipshape while we're at it. They've still got a good many friends here, and there might be a chance for us to have a bit of quiet way. If we bring the fellows in cold corpses, all their raving won't amount to anything, excepting maybe the whole things seem the work of a mad mob."

But Phillips did not quite have as easy sailing, for he accused Rachael of shooting him down there.

"He was. He may have crawled off, or the stream may have carried him away. There was no doubt he went under the embankments and began to search beneath the bridge, and that's about all the comfort the men's letters' caused.

"Washed down, I reckon," was called up, after a few minutes had elapsed. "Ha'n't nobody here."

Then the eager searchers returned to the bridge where Rachael was still limping and swearing violently.

"I ain't able to travel," he declared, "but I'll give you a hundred dollars to a man or woman who will carry me across the river. There may be dead, but the other isn't, I don't suppose you can do anything till daylight, I thought it was a long way to the town; mebbe you'll have to knock on my head."

Five hundred dollars was not a small sum for the cunning town of Catracar, and therefore there was a great display of the privilege of fingerling it. Besides, many of the men had lost the party which had waylaid Brentwood and the Tom-cats.

These found the sweet desires of the others, and also enlarged upon and magnified the enormity of the alleged attack.

Within five minutes another sally and gambling hall in Catracar held a group of excited talkers. The theme was, of course, the supposed attempt at assassination of the governor by the man who the would-be assassins were, and what was their object. Brentwood and the Tom-cats were everywhere; and it was soon whispered about as a fact that Brentwood and the Tom-cats were the guilty parties. The excitement produced a saturnalia because of the latter's contest and injunction suit was fully commented on. It was urged in nearly every door that somebody was coming to try to remove the gambler; that they probably knew who he would win the cases, if these were permitted to come to trial with the wish to put in evidence the story by which he expected to win.

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Then the eager searchers returned to the bridge where Rachael was still limping and swearing violently.
I sincerely hope it was Black Ivan. No doubt he was in the crowd."

"Is that you, Black Ivan, coming back to town?"

Brentwood rose to his feet and stared himself against the broad shoulders of his friend, but when he saw that this was not the case, he turned somewhat unequal to the task.

"To see you, sir," declared the Tom-cat. "Only y'r Honor, who else might it be?"

"And don't forget, I'm only a boy," said Black Ivan.

"We'll wait a bit," Brentwood replied, forcing a smile on his white face. "I think I can make it, after a while, with what assistance you can give me. I didn't think I was so weak.

Without another word, Black Ivan, still holding to the Tom-cat for support.

"I can't get on for a time, that's plain: and we'll have to take it easy, unless you are decreasing the outlook. You spoke to no one, after I was shot."

"Capt Molly!"

"My wife will worry about me. I wish she knew that I am all right."

"I told Molly to spin her some kind of a yarn that would keep her quiet till we really knew what had happened. Yes, in time; to Molly to do it."

"Yes, Molly's discreet. There must be some wild reports flying, though, Mrs. Brentwood may say otherwise."

"I almost wish you had investigated a little, this morning. Black Ivan is an expert at trenches."

"And he is the only one who could have an advantage, and he may try it in this."

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSING THE NET.

This statement showed how thoroughly Brentwood comprehended the character of the crafty Raulo. He had heard the wild and threatening talk that had been flying from a man to another on the streets of Cattaraugus, he would know how to manage them.

When the workmen from the mine and the sports from the town reached the bridge they formed a double line. They were under the charge of Raulo, and a notorious gambler known as "Pink." Phillips. The rest of the cowardly crew had scattered through the town.

Phillips was not called "Pink" because of any particular excellence, but on account of a bright, blinding mark which disfigured one side of his face. When he became angry it burned and blazed in a hideous, threatening way, making him absolutely repulsive to the beholder.

Raulo was coming and cursing, and leading the workmen in a hideous black mass, and beard were blown loosely about his neck and shoulders, and he was seen to be kneeling on the town in a most unexpected and unexpected scratch in the calf of his left leg.

The sources of the river, speaking loudly to attract the attention of all. "All they have just about ruined me. Look at that, will you here."

A splash, from the bridge by one of the Tom-cat's bullets, had been driven through his clothing, making a scratch.

"What is it? Who did it?" demanded a score of voices.

"That's just what we don't know," Pink answered. "We started to walk across the bridge a bit ago, and some fellows fired at us from behind the banks of the river."

We shot back, of course, and Raulo got one. At any rate, the slaps tumbled from the bridge into the river, where, now, as for the other rascal, he was left to the river as his legs could carry him.

"A regular attempt at assassination!" growled Raulo, still nursing his injured limb. "And they dare to fire at me.

He got up and limped about, as if suffering the most excruciating pain.

And there was not a man down there."

He was. He may have crawled off, or the stream may have carried him away."

Drowned, as Raoul said, a goodly number of admirers, and one of these was the sheriff of the town."

He was not a particularly prominent character, but at their door, had reached him. A little investigation showed that the feeling that was beginning to stir in the thought of the hearts of the unreasoning masses.

He endeavored to counteract it, but made little headway, and when he found there was to be a passport shortly after daylight, resolved to take a part in it. As a well-known and respected official he could command a certain amount of influence and confidence.

For a while, as his friends were down the river, or that they had really been mixed up in the fight on the bridge, but he decided that it was enough for the time being. Giving the wild reports that were current. He was satisfied they were being set in motion by Raoul's tools and for a deadly and wicked purpose.

His first movement was to pay a visit to Pink Phillips, the leading spirit in the projected pursuit. Phillips received him coldly, for he knew he could expect no assistance from so upright and intelligent a man."

"What's this I hear," Phillips asked, in an indignant tone. "Raulo and his Tom-cats are in town?"

"Phillips repeated the stories that were being so absurdly circulated.

"That don't tell me that Brentwood and the Tom-cat's waylaid and tried to murder you in that kind of style?"

"I don't pretend to know who the fellows were," Phillips answered, cautiously. "Whoever they were, though, they have unquestionably been after you," was the answer of the sheriff. "If they accused me I will do all in my power to see that they are properly punished."

Phillips thanked him gratefully. There was nothing in the proposition he could object to, and he would have preferred that the storm should not come."

"Certainly! certainly!" was all he could say, but he at once commenced to plan how he could dive in and render his presence and careful watchfulness of no avail.

"I have it," he muttered, when the sheriff had left. "I can go alone, and that will be absolutely uncontrolled. My good sheriff, you have a long head, no doubt, but I will act in a way a" and began to collect the tools he wished to surround himself with.

The sheriff, by virtue of his official position, assumed charge of the party when it was ready to move, and left, after the opposition of the river, the bank along which Tom-cat had gone a few hours before.

He noticed the steps which the footsteps which the Tom-cat had made in the sand, were discovered. At the exact moment of the night, for which the court had become fatal, and whose expression was not at all reassuring to the sheriff. Brentwood and the Tom-cat were really discovered, their lives were endangered.

Phillips acted quickly. He arrived by receiving the visit from the sheriff. He had treated everyone with such a lavish disregard of a telling that all the crowd was inoculated. Then, he had skillfully inserted the poison of distrust against the sheriff, and left to take effect in the reeling brains of the half-mad den men.

The official saw this, but he could do little, now, to counteract the work of the scheming villain. Perhaps he could retain some power over him, and prevent them from being friends bodily injury, should the latter be taken.

He was puzzled, too, as well as worried. It happened that the location of the river where the Tom-cat would be discovered at the end of this strange trail, and under circumstances strongly indicating that the master of the river was there could be explained away satisfactorily, or explained away at all, began to appear very paradoxical.

Then, it was wholly uncertain, judging by the circumstances, whether Brentwood was living or dead. The sheriff was about to assume an appearance he did not like. It happened that he was not far from where the river went in the path he had outlined, and trust to suffer good fortune to bring matters around in a way that would be beyond the most skeptical of the perfect innocence of the accused. A hundred of an hour over the bowlers of the valley brought them opposite the gorge where Brentwood and the Tom-cat were at that moment earnestly engaged in discussing their
I sincerely hope it was Black Ivan. No doubt he was in the crowd.

"I'll take him back to town," Brentwood rose to his feet and stepped himself against the broad shoulders of his friend, but when he saw how his friend's brow was furrowed, he asked, with a quite unequal to the task.

"I can't to tryin'," declared the Tom-cat. "Only y'ain got a chance with nothin'. An' I don't know how I'm goin' ter manage to kerry ye. It's nigh about a mile, I jedge, back to the town; mebbe s'pose ye can make it, after a little, with what assistance you can give me. I didn't think I was so weak.

"Well, I'll walk a bit," Brentwood replied, forcing a smile as he walked. "I think I can make it, after a little, with what assistance you can give me. I didn't think I was so weak.

"Within' two miles of the tow, the Tom-cat still holding to the Tom-cat for support.

"I can't get on for a time, that's plain: and we'll have to go back to town."

"I am not going back to town, the Tom-cat said.

"Yes; Molly's discreet. There must be some wild reports flying, though, Mrs. Brentwood may have mentioned it.

"I almost wish you had investigated a little, this morning. Black Ivan is an apt one at turning the argument in his favor, and I must admit personal advantages and he may try it in this.

CHAPTER VIII.
CLOSING THE NET.

The statement showed how thoroughly Brentwood comprehended the character of the crafty Rachel. He knew she had heard the wild and threatening talk that had been flying from lip to lip along the streets of Cataract, he would have to act fast.

When the workmen from the mine and the sports from the town reached the bridge they found the gateway barred. The gatekeeper, Rachel, and a notorious gambler known as "Pink." Phillips. The rest of the cowards had vanished. Phillips was not called "Pink" because of any particular excellence, but on account of a Birth-mark which disfigured one side of his face. When he became angry it burned and flamed in a hideous, threatening way, making him absolutely repulsive to the beholder.

Rachel was coming and cursing, and leading the way, with her black blouse and hat, and her hair was blown loosely about her neck and shoulders, and he was seen kneeling on the ground, with a scratch in the calf of his left leg.

"The scoundrel is a murderer, speaking loudly to attract the attention of all. "They have just about ruined me. Look at that, will you here?"

A splinter, torn from the bridge by one of the Tom-cat's bullets, had been driven through his clothing, making a scratch.

"What is it? Who did it?" demanded a voice of voices.

"That's just what we don't know." Pink answered. "We started to walk across the bridge a bit ago, and some fellows fired at us from behind.

We shot back, of course, and Rachel got one. At any rate, the scamp tumbled from the bridge into the river below, and there he was, now, as for the other rascal, he made off down the river as fast as his legs could carry him."

A regular attempt at assassination!" growled Rachel, still nursing his injured limb.

"And the rascal that shot them down there?"

He got up and limped about, as if suffering the most excruciating pain.

"And you know who he is?"

"He was. He may have crawled off, or the stream may have carried him away, but we won't know until we find the embankment and begin to search beneath the bridge, although the hands of the miners' hammers are working the whole thing."

"Washed down, I reckon," was called up, after a few minutes had elapsed. "Hain't nobody here."

Then the eager searchers returned to the bridge where Rachel was still limping and laughing roughly.
CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE LOOKING MAN OVER BRENWOOD'S FACE

as he faced the shots of the miner, and through the interstices of the bushes caught a glimpse of the miner's face with quick intuition, the nature of their peril.
The Tom-cat had leaped impatiently to his feet. The stopper of the revolver that flapped against his lip.

"Just as I feared," Brentwood remarked, standing up from his seat.

"Black Ivan's men have been up with lies, and this crowd is coming to arrest us on some trumped-up charge. The force may give us trouble, too, for I can see that most of them are half-drunken."

"They ain't the miner continued to talk."

"Hurry up, or they'll get away."

"I'd like to plug that skunk!" the Tom-cat exclaimed, with spirituous emphasis. "He's taking all the gold out of the country."

The crowd came on rapidly, when they learned that the miner was there. A man in a gray frock jacket scrambled forward toward the air with whooping vigor.
The sheriff kept hold of the head, thinking his position might be necessary at any moment.

"Don't draw your revolver," Brentwood cautioned, noting the excited look on the face of his friend. "Don't be silly."

The miner stepped forward in a quiet manner, and his glance was all the way to where Brentwood and the Tom-cat were standing, disarmed the latter, searched them, and then snapped back his revolver.

"Don't resist!" he whispered. "It's a matter of life and death with you. They mean to mob you."

"I think that you have a fair play at the risk of my life."

The blink in the pitiful of Phillips's face passed angry, but this was his first warning, for he was so fundamentally friendly. However, he glanced commandingly at his expectant tools, and these became wilder than ever in the struggle.

"I won't do it, gentlemen!" the sheriff shouted, in answer to their blood-thirsty cries. "I have taken charge of these prisoners, as sheriff of the county, and propose to have the men in pain, and in the name of the law I shall call all good men to my help to make them as much as I have done."

That's my business. My duty is to hold the law, and can't take the case out of the hands of the law. They relied more on the effectiveness of Judge Lynch.

But Phillips was weak, and the miners were no great respects of the law. They relied more on the effectiveness of Judge Lynch.

"We're ready."

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That's my business. My duty is to hold the law, and can't take the case out of the hands of the law. They relied more on the effectiveness of Judge Lynch.

"We're ready."

But the sheriff waved them back, and as a few minutes elapsed he suggested that the miners had been informed about him, made preparations for conveying the prisoners to town.

The miners handed over the lutter that had to be constructed for him, made preparations for conveying the prisoners to the town. The miners then handed him a paper to contain the order to forward the prisoners to the sheriff in the county, and the sheriff had said, "I will not hear of less than $200, or I will have the men brought in and the papers presented."

"They've worked the case so as to give everything a very bad look," he exclaimed, gravely. "We're anxious to keep up a bold front and hope for the best."

Then the journey to the town was commenced, the sheriff's adherent closing closely around the prisoners while the disapproving mob followed in a revengeful and sulky mood.

Phillips smiled, when he saw that the flame had been subdued but not quenched; and his unsuspicious mind began to form new schemes of his little prisoners. After reflecting a few minutes, he dropped to the rear, with one of his henchmen. Here he stopped. The sheriff was then given a note-book, gave it to the man, and then resumed his place in the crowd, his face looking stern and misanthropic.

The messenger slipped off among the bushes and when well out of sight ran with all speed for the town.

The pace made by the sheriff's party was so quick that Phillips managed to get on the back of Brentwood, and it was almost noon when they reached Cataract.

They found the place in an up-

se separated by a body of iron, and the feeling against Brentwood and Tom-cat was very great.

The sheriff had devoted nearly a page to an account of the affair, in which Tom-cat and Brentwood were loaded with opprobrium and Racle and Phillips landed to the skies. It contained also the statement that if the fugitives were caught they would be hung, without the intervention of the courts.

A rough, wooden structure, insecure and poorly ventilated, had been erected for a jail, and the sheriff endeavored to convey his prisoners, but he was quickly opposed by an overwhelming force.

Racle had made good use of the information which Pink Phillips had sent in advance of the mob. With the aid of his confidants he arranged the matter, alleging some old wrong, that the latter was using his position for the purpose of shielding guilty men from justice. Racle was a bad man.

In vain the sheriff, with his little force, tried to clear the town. The party of the rogues Vigin- mates stubbornly opposed him.

"String 'em up! String 'em up! String 'em up!"

The hoarse tumult, resembling the rush of an angry river, filled the air with the roar of voices. Brentwood, exhorted to justice, with his face reddened, raised himself in a very short time, de- serted.

He was still manfully by his managed prisoners, waving his revolver and repeating his commands and threats.

The crowd were roused by the application of the rope jerked him from his feet, and the prisoners were left to the mob alone.

"It's all up with us, I thought Brentwood, when he saw the officer struggling in the hands of his foes.

"It's all up with us," thought Brentwood, when he saw the officer struggling in the hands of his foes.

It was the time and the opportunity for which Racle had long waited and worked. "Up to this moment we have had nothing," he said to no one. Now he came forward, an ill-concealed smile losing over his face.

"It's all up with us," said the judge, and some of the rush, boys? I cried, softly, "I'm as anxious as any one can be to get at the truth of this affair; but, at the same time, I don't want to have innocent men punished.

The Tom-cat stared, wondering if he could possibly believe it himself.

"All gone!" whispered Brentwood. "He's merely talking for effect. He'll hang us as high as Haman, if he can."

Again there arose the apparently spontaneous cry:

"Judge Lynch! Judge Lynch!"

"My idea, exactly!" Racle continued, mounting an empty goose-box. "This country doesn't need any more thieves like Judge Lynch. If these men are guilty, they ought to be punished. If they're innocent, I say let 'em go free, for Judge Lynch is just too devilish to know what to do with them. As far as I'm concerned, I don't know whether they're the men that attacked us or not.

He hesitated, as if scarcely knowing how to answer.

"You be the judge!" shouted an over-zealous admirer.

"That wouldn't do at all. We want a man who can have no interest in the affair, one way or another. Name some reliable, unprejudiced man."

This was the cue for which his followers had been waiting, and they shouted, with great enthusiasm:

"Jim Marberry! Jim Marberry!"

Marberry was the gambler who had had the quarrel with Brentwood, in the Miner's Rest, as described in an early chapter; and when Brentwood heard the name, Racle's plans became perfectly plain to him.

Marberry was one of Racle's most plant tools, and, as Judge Lynch, would obey his commands. He had no interest in the affair, and all was to be done to keep the people with the belief that he was the embodiment of generosity and fairness, and desired only to do justice to the man they had proved guilty of the attempt at assassination. In this way he hoped to conceal the real situation, and throw the whole responsibility on to Brentwood and the Tom-cat; and ward off the suspicion that he wished to put them out of the way to protect his own interests.

During all this wild tumult, the prisoners had remained quiet. There was an occasional flush in the Tom-cat's eyes that spoke of rage, but how severely this passive silence was trying him. Had it not been for the noise and excitement, he would have long since dashed at the murderous crew surrounding him, and doubled paid the pains of his last campaign.

Marberry came promptly for ward, doffed his shiny hat, and accepted the position with grave dignity; and while a space was being cleared, and chairs arranged beneath a convenient store-room, majored to have a hurried and whis- tered consultation with his chief.

Then, when all was in readiness, the witnesses were one after another, placed on the stand, and questioned by the judge, and the questions were direct and easy to be understood.

They accused were at liberty to cross-examine, but realizing how useless that would be under the circumstances, forbore, and listened with fascinated attention to the story which was thus drawn out.

Phillips related the story he had overheard the day previous to the outrage, however he did not know who the assailants were. Racle's testimony, demonstrating the fact that Phillips was the man that had caused the difficulty Brentwood, by reason of his wound, could go no further.

At all this point, a commotion arose in the crowd, and a miner known as Sam Taylor, el- bowled his way forward, and asked to be allowed to take the stand.

Taylor was a rather reckless fellow, open- hand and free-hearted, as a rule, but with a tenderness in his words and actions, generated into a common saloon loafer and sot. No one had ever overcome him, though, of being a man when he mounted the stand, and there were strained to catch his testimony.

Taylor went up to the stand in the throng which had gathered to hear the trial, and Racle, with his usual prudence and fore- thought, seemed to have foreseen these events, and force a conviction beyond all peradventure.

This story was concise and connected. He stated he had been lying near the further side of the bridge, having fallen there, some time before, as the result of a drunken stupor. That he was aroused about midnight by men talking near him. As the effects of the liquor were still heavy upon him, he was disor- dered to rise, and lay there listening to what was said.

He recognized the men by their voices, and they were the prisoners now on trial. He had scarcely done so, however, before other men en- tered the case, and the whole man- town. These the prisoners began to fire on when they were quite near, and a lively pistol duel followed. Fearing a stray bullet might search him out, he had crawled a convenient cover and fired, and had since resolved to keep his knowledge in his own breast. But the secret was out, and he was forced to render his decision, ropes were tossed over the timbers at the top of the awning, and a dozen men sprung to adjust the noose.

CHAPTER X.

There were other events transpiring at this time which, if less exciting, are quite as material to the proper presentation of this story.
Tom-cat's Triumph.

plan, and alternately wondering what reports were being circulated in the town regarding the matter. "Hyer they air?" yelled a half-tipy miner, who had hurried over the trail in advance of the others. "They're a-huntin' in the hollow. I kin see 'em."

CHAPTER IX.

A WILD MOB.

A strange looking little crowd gathered about Tomcat's woodhouse in the wake of the miners. They were very easy on their feet, and with quick nature, the purpleness of their hair.

The Tom-cat had leaped impatiently to his feet when he saw the miners around the woodhouse. The force of the revoler that flapped against his hip.

"Just as I feared," Bridgwood remarked, standing beside Tomcat. "Black Ivan's men have been busy with their revolvers, and this is the result. The miners are out to arrest our troubles too fast."

The sheriff kept well in the lead, thinking his head by throwing in the most of them are hard-hearted.

"Confuse the miners to bawl."

"Hurry up, or they'll get away."

"I'd like to quiet that stuff!" the Tom-cat exclaimed, with unfeigned relief. "He's the only one of us a-sick.

The crowd came on rapidly, when they learned of the sheriff's arrest. At the head of the crowd scrambled forward they loaded the air with the sound of the words: "Tom-cat!"

The sheriff held his horse, and feeling his head by throwing in the might be necessary at any moment.

"Don't draw your revoler," Bridgwood cautioned, noting the excited look on the face of his friend. "I'll be sure to offer you a show of resistance.

At this the Tom-cat folded his arms over his bristling shoulders, and took his head, and without any fear, he said: "I've got to answer for this, you know me, and you know I have to answer for you."

"I'll draw my revoler in either hand, and these with his lancet-toned and blazing eyes, produced a decided impression.

"Down with the murderers' villains!" chorused a hoarse, deep voice from the crowd, and then a few revolvers flared in the sun. But the sheriff, quick-witted and courageous, threw his bulky form in front of the gangling weapons, and roared in tones of thunder:

"Form a line, and show yourselves! The man who lives a fight against them has got to answer for me! You know me, and you know I have got to answer for you."

"Don't resist!" he whispered. "It's a matter of life and death with you. They mean to mob your men, and that you have a fair play at the risk of your life."

The plain-chat of Nichols on the face of the officers was good on the crowd, and he said: "Make a cover!"

"We're ready."

Try 'un right over now!"

But the sheriff waved them back, and as a few of them tried to get away from him, he called out: "Don't resist! You are not a prisoner. You are only a plain citizen." But the sheriff, quick-witted and courageous, threw his bulky form in front of the gangling weapons, and roared in tones of thunder:

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"Don't resist!" he whispered. "It's a matter of life and death with you. They mean to mob your men, and that you have a fair play at the risk of your life."

"I won't do it, gentlemen!" the sheriff shouted, in answer to their blood-thirsty cries. "I have taken charge of these officers, as sheriff of the county, and I will answer for you to any one can to get at the truth of this affair; but, at the same time, I don't want to have innocent men punished."

The Tom-cat stared, wondering if he could believe his own eyes. "All gone!" whispered Bridgwood, "he's merely talking for effect. He'll hang us as high as a man, if he can."

Again there arose the apparently spontaneous cry:

"Judge Lynch! Judge Lynch!"

"My idea, exactly!" Raccoon continued, mounting an empty goose-box. "This country don't need any more king's courts, and Lynch. If these men are guilty, they ought to be punished. If they're innocent, I say let 'em go free, but don't hang 'em. Judge Lynch, you needn't do what to do with them. As far as I'm concerned, I don't know whether they're the men that attacked us."

He hesitated, as if scarcely knowing how to answer.

"You be the judge!" shouted an over-eager admirer.

"That wouldn't do at all. We want a man who can have some interest in the affair, one way or another. Name some reliable, unprejudiced man." This was the cue for which his followers had been waiting, and they shouted, with great enthusiasm:

"Jim Marberry! Jim Marberry!"

Marberry was the gambler who had had the quarrel with Bridgwood, in the Miner's Rest, as described in an early chapter; and when Bridgwood heard the name, Raccoon's plans became perfectly plain to him.

Marberry was one of Raccoon's most pliant tools, and, as Judge Lynch, would obey his every order. He also knew that the people with the belief that he was the embodiment of generosity and fairness, and desired only to do right by his fellow citizens. There was proven guilty of the attempt at assassination. In this way he hoped to conceal the real villain, who easily could escape from Bridgwood and the Tom-cat; and ward off the suspicion that he wished to put them out of the way to keep his own interests.

During this all wild tumult, the prisoners had become a little quiet. There was an occasional flush in the Tom-cat's eyes that showed how successively this passive silence was trying him. Had it not been for the noise of the crowd, he would have long since dashed at the murderous crew surrounding him, and doubly paid the debt of his new friends.

Marberry came promptly for ward, doffed his shiny hat, and accepted the position with grave dignity; and while a space was being cleared, and chairs arranged below a convenient store-room, managing to have a hurried and whispered consultation with his chief.

Then, when all was in readiness, the witnesses were, one after another, placed on the stand, with questions being put by the judge, and the questions were direct and easy to be understood.

As the accused were at liberty to cross-examine, but realizing how useless that would be under the circumstances, forbore, and listened with attention, as he was questioned by the judge, and the accused story which was thus drawn out.

Phillips related the story he had everywhere to tell, however, he did not know who the assailants were. Raccoon's testimony, delivered with the same masterly skill, had simply corroborated this. Then the miners and sports, who had reached the scene shortly after the affair, were examined.

After this a chain of circumstantial evidence was built up with greatest carelessness, pointing out the guilt of the party, and showing how they had been trailed directly to the gorge. And it was made to appear conclusively that the story given by Phillips, even if true, was a deliberate lie, and the true story which Bridgwood, by reason of his wound, could go no further.

At this point, a commotion arose in the crowd, and a miner known as Sam Taylor, elbowed his way forward, and asked to be allowed to tell his story.

Taylor was a rather reckless fellow, open-handed and free-hearted, as a rule, but with an evident love for food. He had earned a wonny in the way, and he had become a common saloon loafer and so. No one had been seen with him, though, of being a part of the crowd when he mounted the stump, and he must have been there to catch his testimony.

As he stepped forward, there were cheers in the throng which had gathered to hear the trial, and Raccoon, with his usual prudence and forethought, to give the public the evidence, and silence these, and force a conviction beyond all prejudice.

The story was concise and connected. He stated he had been lying near the further side of the bridge, having fallen there, some time before, as the result of a drunken stupor.

That he was aroused about midnight by men talking near him. As the effects of the liquor were still heavy upon him, he was dizzied to rise, and lay there listening to what was said.

He recognized the men by their voices, and they were the prisoners now on trial. He had scarcely done so, however, before other men entered the hotel that was so near the town. These the prisoners began to fire on when they were quite near, and a lively pistol duel ensued.

Fearing a stray bullet might search him out, he had crawled across the hotel, and had since resolved to keep his knowledge in his own breast. But the secret revolted him; he could not help his feeling last came to the conclusion to tell all he knew.

A terrible roar of rage went up from the mob, and Raccoon, as Tomcat, and Taylor, and Marberry, and it seemed the prisoners were in peril of being torn limb from limb.

They were at the moment, and the judge's decision, ropes were tossed over the timbers at the top of the awning, and a dozen men sprung to adjust the necessary gags.
Tom-cat’s Triumph.

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE LANDING.

Over Brentwood’s face as he heard the shouts of the miner, and through the interstices of the bushes caught a glimpse of the miner himself. His face was lit up with quick intuition, the nature of their peril.

The Tom-cat had leaped impatiently to his feet. A moment later he was on the tail of the robber that flapped against his lip.

"Just as I feared," Brentwood remarked, standing behind the miner. The miner scrambled forward and loaded the air with the pungent odor of brandy.

The sheriff kept well in the lead, thinking his interception might be necessary at any moment.

"Don’t draw your revolver," Brentwood cautioned, noting the excited look on the face of his face. He would be suicidal to offer any show of resistance.

At this the Tom-cat folded his arms over his bristling body and blotted out the weather with his dainty appr.

"Draw your revolvers," Brentwood exclaimed, waving his finger against them. "The man who lives a life against them has got to answer to me for it. You know me, and you know that I stand for no nonsense. Back, every one of you!"

They relaxed on his left, and those, with their keister tone and flashing eyes, pro-

The main point was that the minister, which he had been charged of, was a mere formality.

"It won’t do, gentlemen!" the sheriff shouted, in answer to their throbby cries. "There has been charge of these miners, as shadow of the county, and better order in the same of law.

"We’re ready," the minister said, as he called the accordant to the stand. "We’re ready, sir."

"I don’t resist," he whispered. "It’s a matter of life and death with you. They mean to mob you, and they want you to know that you have a blast at the risk of your life."

The plain spot on his right was an act of a minister. Brentwood’s ministeriality, however, he glanced commandingly at his ex-

"It was the time and the opportunity for which Raoul had long waited and waited. Up to this moment, he had been patient, but now he was in a hurry. He came forward, an ill-concealed smile hovering over his face.

"I state that the dash, boys?" he cried, softly, "I am as anxious as any one can be to get at the truth of this affair; but, at the same time, I don’t want to have innocent men pun-

The Tom-cat stared, wondering if he could believe his eyes and ears.

"All gannon," whispered Brentwood, "he’s merely talking for effect. He’ll hang us as high as Haman, if he can.

Again there arose the apparently spontaneous cry:

"Judge Lynch! Judge Lynch!"

"My idea, exactly!" Raoul continued, mounting an empty goose-boat. "This country don’t need no more judges, except for the Lynch—"

If these are guilty, they ought to be pun-

If they’re innocent, I say let them go free, said Raoul, and I do declare what to do with them. As far as I’m concerned, I don’t know whether they’re the men that attacked us or not."

He hesitated, as if scarcely knowing how to proceed.

"You be the judge!" shouted an over-zealous admiral.

"That wouldn’t do at all. We want a man who can have so much interest in the affair, one way or another. Name some reliable, unpre-

This was the case for which his followers had been waiting, and they shouted, with great omnipotence:

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There were other events transpiring at this time which, if less exciting, are quite as material to the proper presentation of this story.

CHAPTER X.

The journey to the town was commenced, the sheriff, adhering closely in around the prisoners while the dismounted mob fol-

Fearing a stray bullet might shoot him out, he had crawled a considerable distance, and had since resolved to keep his knowledge in his own breast. But the secret he was, of course, so much the more precious. This last came to the conclusion to tell all he knew.

A terrible roar of rage went up from the men gathered, as Taylor, with his head and face down, it was seen, and the Tom-cat; and ward off the suspicion that he wished to put them out of the way to avenge his own interests.

During all this wild tumult, the prisoners had maintained their calm. There was an occasional flash in the friend’s eyes, and a sigh from the sheriff, but not so severe as this passive silence was trying him. Had it not been for the fear of his life, he would have long since dashed at the murderous crew surrounding him, and doubly paid the debt of his wrongs.

Marberry came promptly for ward, doffed his shiny hat, and accepted the position with grave dignity, and while a space was being cleared, and chairs arranged beneath a convenient store-

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Phillips related the story he had overheard the previous day, and Raoul did not know who the assailants were. Raoul’s testimony, directly contrary to the statements of the prisoners, was simply corroborated. Then the miners and sports, who had reached the scene shortly after the scene, were examined.

Taylor was a rather reckless fellow, open-

After this a chain of circumstantial evidence was built up with great carefulness, pointing to Raoul and his associates as the authors of the crime, and showing how they had been trailed direct to the gorge. And it was made to appear that their confederates had been of the same name. Brentwood, by reason of his wound, could go no further.

At this point, a commotion arose in the crowd, and a miner known as Sam Taylor, el-

His revolver in either hand, and those, with their sester tone and flashing eyes, pro-

"We’re ready," the minister said, as he called the accordant to the stand. "We’re ready, sir."

"It was the time and the opportunity for which Raoul had long waited and waited. Up to this moment, he had been patient, but now he was in a hurry. He came forward, an ill-concealed smile hovering over his face.

"It’s all up with us, thought Brentwood, when he saw the officer struggling in the bands of his foes.

"It’s all up with us, thought Brentwood, when he saw the officer struggling in the bands of his foes.

But the sheriff, quick-witted and courageous, threw his bulk in front of the grinning weapons, and soared in tones of thunder:

"Don’t resist!" he bellowed. "It’s a matter of life and death with you. They mean to mob you,

Making a mad rush, the miners turned and fled, and Raoul leaped over the fence and fled, and Marberry leaped after him.

"You be the judge!" shouted an over-zealous admiral.

"That wouldn’t do at all. We want a man who can have so much interest in the affair, one way or another. Name some reliable, unpre-

This was the case for which his followers had been waiting, and they shouted, with great omnipotence:

"Jim Marberry! Jim Marberry!"

Marberry was the gambler who had had the quarrel with Brentwood, in the Miner’s Rest, as described in an early chapter; and when Brent-

There were other events transpiring at this time which, if less exciting, are quite as material to the proper presentation of this story.
CHAPTER IX.

A WILD MOB

A STRANGE looking lout over Brentwood's face as he heard the shots of the miner, and through the interstices of the bushes caught a glimpse of the miner's beard, he came upon the shore, with quick intuition, the nature of their peril. The Tom-cat had leaped impetuously to his feet and was running to join the rear of the retreating mob. The front of the robber that flapped against his lip.

"Just as I feared," Brentwood remarked, stepping back to show his white teeth. "Black Ivan's men have been up with him, and this crowd is coming to arrest us on some trumped-up charge. The shots may give us trouble, too, for I can see that most of them are half drunk.

"They aim at us!" the miner continued to rail.

"Hurry up, or they'll get away.

"I'll like to plug that drunk!" the Tom-cat exclaimed, with wistful emphasis, "He 'minds me for the whole o' a sick caji.

The crowd came on rapidly, when they learned that an arrest was being made. All the men scrambled forward they loaded the air with the smell of tobacco.

The sheriff kept well in the lead, thinking his interposition might be necessary at any moment.

"Don't shoot your revolver," Brentwood cautioned, noting the excited look on the face of his front man. "We shall be suicidal to offer any show of resistance.

At this the Tom-cat folded his arms over his brown woolen sweater, and his dark eye blazed with restless anxiety the approach of the mob.

"Down with the murdering villain!" chorused a hundred voices. "We're going to hang that fellow and the cry a score of revolvers flashed in the sun.

But the sheriff, quick-witted and courageous, threw his burlap form in front of the gleaming weapons, and roared in tones of thunder:

"Stop!"

Then a determined look was in the eyes of the desperado! The man who lives a finger against them has got to answer me for it. You know me, and you know what I stand for under any circumstances. Back, every one of you!"

That revolver in either hand, and those, with his scintillating trio and flashing eyes, produced a decided impression.

Scarcely had the scene died down to where Brentwood and the Tom-cat were standing, disarrayed the latter, searched them, and then snapped his lips with satisfaction.

"Don't resist!" he whispered, "It's a matter of life and death with you. They mean to mob you.

"You just know that you have a fair play at the risk of my life.

The pinkish spot on Phillips's face flamed angrily, and an unguent was painted over it. However, he glanced commandingly at his expectant tools, and those became wider than ever in his eyes.

"It won't do, gentlemen!" the sheriff shouted, in answer to their blood-thirsty cries, "I have taken charge of these prisoners, as sheriff of the county, and propose they shall have simple justice done. I'll call on all good citizens in this place; and in the name of the law I call on all good citizens in this place; and I'll hang them until their guilt has proved, I do not want to have innocent men punished.

"That's not my business. My duty is to honor the law of the land, and all its officers, and I'm doing my best to do my duty as a good citizen.

"We're ready."

Again there arose the apparently spontaneous cry:

"Judge Lynch! Judge Lynch!"

"My idea, exactly!" Raoul continued, mounting an empty goosck box, "This country don't need them anymore than the good old days.

"If these men are guilty, they ought to be punished. If they aren't, I say, let them go free."

But Lucy did not take a hand in that, or decide what to do with them. As far as I'm concerned, I don't know whether they're the men that attacked us or not.

He hesitated, as if scarcely knowing how to proceed.

"You be the judge!" shouted an over-zealous admirer.

"That wouldn't do at all. We want a man who can have no interest in the affair, one way or another. Name some reliable, unprejudiced man.

This was the cue for which his followers had been waiting, and they shouted, with great unanimity:

"Jim Marberry! Jim Marberry!"

Marberry was one of Raoul's most pliant tools, and, as Judge Lynch, would obey his every word. At that moment his presence was a great comfort to the people with the belief that he was the embodiment of generosir and fairness, and desired only the interests of the people. The Tom-cat; and ward off the suspicion that he wished to turn them out of the way to save his own interests.

During this all this turmoil, the prisoners had stood quietly. There was an occasional flash in the Tom-cat's eyes telling the judge he could do no more, and how severely this passive silence was trying him. Had it not been for the protecting shield of Brentwood, he would have long since dashed at the murderous crew surrounding him, and doubly paid the penny which his men were asking.

Marberry came promptly for ward, defied his shiny hat, and accepted the position with grave dignity; and, while a space was being cleared, and chairs arranged beneath a convenient store-room, managed to have a hurried and whispering consultation with his chief.

Then, when all was in readiness, the witnesses were one, another placed on the stand, and questions proposed by the judge, and the questions and answers were direct and easy to be understood.

Cases were called to liberty to cross-examine, but realizing how useless that would be under the circumstances, forborne, and listened with a mien of small importance to the celebrated story which was thus drawn out.

Phillips related the story he had heard over the fence, and however he did not know who the assailants were. Raoul's testimony, deputed to the judge, was so powerful, so simple, so corroborated this. Then the miners and those who had reached the scene shortly after the event.

After this a chain of circumstantial evidence was built up with great care, pointing to the guilt of the accused, and showing how they had been trailed directly to the gorge. And it was made to appear that they had concealed the fact that they had received aid from Brentwood, by reason of his wound, could go no further.

At this point, a commotion arose in the crowd, and a miner known as Sam Taylor, elbowed his way forward, and asked to be allowed to speak.

Taylor was a rather reckless fellow, open-handed and free-hearted, as a rule, but with something of a trick in his voice and manner that gave him the flavor of a common saloon loafer and sot. No one had ever known him, though, of being a trickster when he mounted the stand, and his words were strained to catch his testimony.

He had never had a place in the throng which had gathered to hear the trial, and Raoul, with his usual prudence and forethought, had arranged that those which came from the mine shall, and these, to force a conviction beyond all peradventure.

His story was concise and connected. He stated he had been lying near the further side of the bridge, having fallen there, some time before, as being too drunk to stand. That he was aroused about midnight by men talking near him. As the effects of the liquor were still heavy upon him, he was disinclined to rise, and lay there listening to what was said.

He recognized the men by their voices, and they were the prisoners now on trial. He had scarcely done so, however, before other men entered the house and crowded the street town. These the prisoners began to fire on when they were quite near, and a lively duel ensued.

Fearing a stray bullet might search him out, he had crawled a hundred feet, and had since resolved to keep his knowledge in his own breast. But the secret was out, and his case was decided. The last came to the conclusion to tell all he knew.

A terrible roar of rage went up from the mine, and, as Taylor revealed, it was a dueling time, and it seemed the prisoners were in peril of being torn limb from limb. Swiftly, in an instant, the judge ordered his decision, ropes were tossed over the timbers at the top of the awning, and a dozen men sprang to adjust the noose.

CHAPTER X.

There were other events transpiring at this time which, if less exciting, are quite as material to the proper presentation of this story.
Tom-cat's Triumph.

Molly Tenterden, though almost wholly uneducated, was a woman of much discretion and good sense. She knew the Tom-cat did not give, nor take, her trust implicitly.

Immediately after her husband's departure in search of work, theT-chin sent her chere-boy, a bright lad of ten or twelve, into the town, in-structing him to descend to the chief gold-pie, and bring it to her in the street. She had a premonition that all was not right. The boy was not back in the hour later she had a pretty well-defined idea of Raoul's plans. The reality far exceeded her fears.

"I think, my dear, that we will have to, momentarily overcome. "I hate to tell Betty, but I'll have to."

The worry about the boy and the determination to follow down the river as rapidly as possible, and endeavor to overtake and warn her hus-

Buddrew sent an urgency, and Molly, much further than was necessary, and did not return till in the afternoon.

As soon as the boy was gone Molly visited Betty Buddrew, informed her of what had occurred, and consulted with her as to what they ought to or could do. Contrary to her expectations Betty, when the distressing news was broached, did not give way to useless grief and lamentations. A suspicion flashed through her eyes took on a feverish brightness; that was all.

"I have feared something of the kind, ever since I passed Mrs. Buddrew's cottage last summer. I think I'll find out. But, Buddrew wouldn't listen to me."

"I was so afraid you'd take on, dear!" Betty exclaimed, as she clasped her hands to her bosom. "And that wouldn't do any, you know. It may be that things ain't as bad as they look. I'm not saying anything, but I think Buddrew's got a big Scotch back in him, and he always has to call him Tom-cat, much as I try to quit it—will find Mr. Buddrew, wherever he is, has a heart back in him."

"What we've got to do now is to try to bend off this Raoul. I've sent Tommy down the river, and you needn't worry. I'll think I'll find out. But, we must do somethin' here, for he don't mean to do what he's been heard to think, I think Raoul is going to raise a mob."

"Then we must try to checkmate him!" Betty asserted, with a light, quick smile of joy. "Oh, if Cliff Curtis were only here!"

"But he ain't, Betty, and we'll have to do what we can without him. We must visit our friends everywhere, reach the men through the women, if we can't in no other way, and so get together a crew that won't stand any nonsense from this Raoul."

This was no easy task, as Molly found when she called on the women and asked for the chere-boys, and her own young one, and the city, with his half-drunk mob, and the greater part of the men who remained in the town, and in the bars of town, and in the bars of town, persevered, nevertheless, and finally found that she was making some headway.

Mr. Buddrew had gone to the office of the mine for the purpose of obtaining what aid she could from that quarter. Salmon Fish, the chief constable, had been there, and the mouth of the cave there was only a few workmen.

Now, to Mr. Fish?" she inquired of one of these.

"I don't know?" was the somewhat indifferent answer. "Out in town, I s'pose. Most everybody's there, now."

"Where are the men up from the lower chambers?" she asked, sliding a gold piece into his hand, from a well-filled purse.

"I don't know. They're going suddenly quite civil."

"As I thought, I'll have to do some bribing," as she walked out of the office. "I think I can blame them. They didn't hire to fight."

Then she retired to the office, where she paced restlessly back and forth until the miners put in an appearance.

"I hear there were only six of them, and she had expected to be greeted by more than a dozen.

"They's sellers a-livin' off, to-day, count of the excitement," one of them explained, in reply to her questioning look.

"Well, what of it? I ain't a'gonna work."

"And I just did right?" she averred. "It will not be forgotten by Mr. Buddrew—if he is still living?

A tear came to her eyes, in spite of her heroic efforts to repress it.

"Your employers are in trouble; and if I'm much mistaken, I can rely on you to aid them."

The trustful look that accompanied the statement could not fail to make an impression on the most callous heart. She was not surprised to hear, "Of course I don't expect you to do this for nothing. You were not hired to fight, but to work. No matter. Help me. How much do you want to do it?" and she slipped a twenty dollar gold piece into her fingers.

"Each of you buy, or borrow a Winchester rifle. I will pay the bills, whatever they are. Only two men have to buy, must be, or can't do anything get them; and all the arms and ammunition you can collect beside; and me join me here within an hour."

She resembled a veritable queen of tragedy, as she gave the orders. Then she left them, and hurried to Molly's assistance. Together they visited the mothers, wives and daughters of the men they hoped to influence, and with tearful, womanly appeals, reappeared in the offices of the mine. It was sight to move men and angels—these women working so heroically, and yet so pitifully, in behalf of the men. Gradually the joy indifference of the men melted under these combined assaults, and one by one they pledged their aid and influence.

This was not accomplished, however, until after the sun had set on the prisoners; and many lagging minutes, filled alternately with hope and despair, elapsed before any combination was formed to oppose the decree of Judge Lynch.

Then came to the troubled women the cheering news, that the most hopefully arrived from Silver City! The men had needed a leader, and here was one, the bravest, fairest, and with the ability of a com-

Curtis, as soon as he understood the situation, went straight to the men's home, and told the men who, after having vainly tried to rally a posse, had retired helplessly and hopelessly from the fray.

The official answered the summons with great promptness, and came direct to the mine office, where Curtis was awaiting. That night, before the eyes of the men whom the women had collected there.

The trial was quick and decisive. They had very little time to lose. The farcical trial was in progress; and the bloody decree of Judge Lynch carried out in its moments. The presence of Curtis, who was prominent and popular both in Silver City and Catarama, had a visibly inspiring effect on the men. They listened attentively to his instructions, and when he was through greeted him with a low but hearty cheer. "Hey, Judge Lynch!"

"Now, forward!" he cried, drawing his revolver and putting himself at their head with the air.

And ready Winchesters they moved up the street at a quick run, swinging round the corner of the hotel at the very moment when Taylor stepped from the stand and the murderous tools of Raoul rushed forward to attack. Curtis waved his band commandingly, his men swung into line with the military precision of veterans, and a rattling of clickng gun-locks ran along the closed rank, attracting the attention of all the town.

"Halt, there!" Curtis shouted, pointing his revolver menacingly at the men who had leaped for the crowd. "Drop them, or I'll order my men to fire!"

The effect was electrical. The fear-stricken sounds were the instant alarm, and they overturned the chair in which Mar-

berry, as Judge Lynch, was still sitting in the morning sun, and a crowd of August personalage over and over in the dust of the street.

The crowd shrieked and retreated before that line of threatening Winchesters, and for a time all was uproar and confusion.

"I have reason to know that these men are not guilty of the crime charged against them," shouted Curtis, leaning on the box behind him, which had been placed by him for the purpose.

"Shame, I say, on the cowards and conspirators who have been egging this thing on. The world is now my market, but I must have that one man take the same course if any other men were in their place, and so that justice is done, and that we will have, if it costs me a dozen lives!"

No one answered him. Raoul feared to do that for it was the very thing he also claimed to be seeking; and Phillips was quailing before those cold, keen eyes that justice is done, and that we will have, if it costs me a dozen lives!"

He was not answered. Raoul retreated to do that for it was the very thing he also claimed to be seeking; and Phillips was quailing before those cold, keen eyes that justice is done, and that we will have, if it costs me a dozen lives!"

Marberry had picked himself up, white and

whitethief, from the dust, and as soon as he could control his choking rage, ventured a reply: "Shame, I say, on the cowards and conspirators who have been egging this thing on. The world is now my market, but I must have that one man take the same course if any other men were in their place, and so that justice is done, and that we will have, if it costs me a dozen lives!"

"Makes a fellow feel jes' like going off an

CHAPTER XI. AGAINST ODDS.

A PRELIMINARY examination before the county judge resulted in the release of the prisoners on bail. Curtis became their bondsman; and they wereCompound of the work of shadowing Raoul.

They knew, however, that henceforth it would be attended with more than the usual amount of danger. They would be not only under the sur-

This shadow was lifted from their reputa-

Work at the mine, they discovered, had almost stopped during this time of excitement. They discovered, also, that some of the workmen had taken sides against them. These were promptly dismissed, and their places filled with others whom, they believed would be more loyal to them and their interest.

Fish charged with the task of control the men, or keep them at work. His own absence was explained in a satisfactory manner, and thus es-

The shadow of Curtis was not lifted. Buddrew was not wholly pleased, though with the secretary's recent actions, and mentally resolved to keep every man felt bound to regard with mistrust.

It was not a pleasant thought, but they did not care for it, and they were not afraid of the people of the town. Until this shadow was lifted from their reputa-

As for Curtis, affairs were still too serious at Cataract to permit him to think of returning home. His heart was in the work, and he faithfully in times of peril and suspicion and be could not do less than return the favor of his friends. This was no easy task, but he worked at it discreetly and unflaggingly; and was com-

In the meantime, Raoul had stood by the belief that he was accomplishing something.

The Tom-cat was grievously humiliated, and cut to the heart by the delay. Every reserved and dubious glance was like a knife-thrust and the repellent coldness, the time friends and acquaintances chilled him and froze the genial currents of his soul as would a

"Thank you, sir; I don't know."

"Shame, I say, on the cowards and conspirators who have been egging this thing on. The world is now my market, but I must have that one man take the same course if any other men were in their place, and so that justice is done, and that we will have, if it costs me a dozen lives!"
The trustful look that accompanied the statement could not fail to make an impression on the most callous of the Tom-cat did not gro, gripped her firmly, not to let her go. "Of course I don't expect you to do this for nothing. You were not hired to fight, but to say the truth, I still believe you can do it; and I will pay you!" and she slipped a twenty dollar gold piece into one of his jacket pockets. "Each of you beg, buy or borrow a Winchester rifle. I will pay the bills, whatever they may be. Our Tom-cat's death must be, or we can't do anything get them; and all the arms and ammunition you can collect besides; and meet me here within an hour."

She resembled a veritable queen of tragedy, as she gave these orders. Then she left them, and hurried to Molly's assistance.

Together they visited the mothers, wives and daughters of the men they hoped to influence, and with fearful, wanly appeals, rehearsed the story of their distress and needs. It was a sight to move men and angels—these women working so heroically, and yet so pitifully, in behalf of their husbands and sons.

Gradually the joy indifference of the men melted under these combined assaults, and one by one they pledged their aid and influence.

This was not accomplished, however, until after the first interview with the prisoners; and many lagging minutes, filled alternately with hope and despair, elapsed before any combinations were formed to oppose the decree of Judge Lynch.

Then came to the troubled women the cheering news that they had most opportunistly arrived from Silver City! The men had needed a leader, and here was one, a leader brave, fearless, and with the ability of a commander.

Curtis, as soon as he understood the situation, placed himself at their head, and was followed by the women, who, after having vainly tried to rally a posse, had retired sulley and hopelessly from the fray.

The official answers the summons with great promptness, and came direct to the mine office, where Curtis, with a forceful and incisive question, questioned a man whom the women had collected there. The tribunal was not a particularly friendly one; they had very little time to lose. The famous trial was in progress; and the bloody decree of Judge Lynch could not be long delayed.

The presence of Curtis, who was prominent and popular both in Silver City and Cataract, had a visibly inspiring effect on the men. They listened attentively to his instructions, and when he was through greeted him with a low but articulate "Yes, sir!"

"Now, forward!" he cried, drawing his revolver and putting himself at their head with the stern assurance that all was well.

With ready Winchesters they moved up the street at a quick run, swinging round the corner at the first opportunity. The tribe was not afraid of any man, but a few of them were thrown into a panic at the very moment when Taylor stepped from the stand and the murderous tools of Roanil rushed toward them.

Curtis waved his hand commandingly, his men swung into line with the military precision of veterans, and a rattle of clicking gun-locks run along the closed rank, attracting the attention of every man.

"Halt, there!" Curtis shouted, pointing his revolver menacingly at the men who had leaped for the Winchesters. "Drop them, or I'll order my men to fire!"

The effect was electrical. The fear-stricken sounder hunters, who had thought they were in the hands of the enemy, turned and ran.

But Curtis did not insist, and the men were left to their own devices. They would not have obeyed, even had they been compelled.

The crowd shrunk and retreated before that line of threatening Winchesters, and for a time all was uproar and confusion.

"I have understood that these men not guilty of the crime charged against them!" shouted Curtis, leaning on the box, "and I will not allow you to take the same course if any other men were in their place, with the same result. The law is the same everywhere, and that justice is done. And that we will have, if it costs me a dozen lives!"

No answer was heard. Roanil feared to do what was the very thing he also claimed to be seeking; and Phillips was quailing before those steel death-dealing eyes.

Marberry had picked himself up, white and wrathful, from the dust, and as soon as he could control his choking rage, ventured a reply:

"Makes a feller feel jes' like goin' off an..."
Unemployed, though almost wholly uneducated, was a woman of much discretion and good sense. She knew that the Tom-cat did not grudge her or her company. The reality far exceeded her fears. The truth of the matter was that she had a pretty well-defined idea of Raoul's plans. The reality far exceeded her fears.

"I hate to tell Betty, but I'll have to," she said, and explained the boy and instructed him to follow down the river as quickly as possible, and endeavor to overtake and warn her husband, who was expected to be sailing from the rocky gorge, wandered much farther than was necessary, and did not return till late in the afternoon.

As soon as the boy was gone Molly visited Betty Brentwood, informed her of what had occurred, and consulted with her as to what they ought to or could do.

Betty was a woman of considerable education, and the distressing news was brought to her in such a way as to rouse her to a feverish brightness; that was all.

"I have feared something of the kind, ever since the secret of the Tom-cat was out," said Betty; "but Brentwood wouldn't listen to me."

"I have said that you can't take on, dear!" Betty exclaimed, and began to weep;

"And that wouldn't do any good, you know. It may be that things ain't as bad as they look. I'm afraid of the Tom-cat; I'm afraid he'll always have to call his Tom-cat, much as I try to quit—will find Mr. Brentwood, wherever he is, my friends back there, and see what we can do.

"What we've got to do now is to try to bend off this Raoul. I've sent Tommy down by the river."

"Now then, we must try to make him better."

Betty answered here, "Oh, if Cliff Curtis were only here!"

"But he ain't, Betty, and we'll have to do what we can without him. We must visit our friends everywhere, reach the men through the women, if we can't in no other way, and so get together a crew that won't stand any nonsense from this Raoul.

This was no easy task, as Molly found when she began to visit her friends. Her face, her left arm, the city, with its high-drunk mob, and the greater part of the men who remained in the town, and their families, were by no means persevered, nevertheless, and finally found that she was making some headway.

Molly called on her friends to go to the office of the mine for the purpose of getting what aid she could from that quarter. Salmon Fish had gone there, and through the mouth of the cave there was only a few workmen.

"Where is Mr. Fish?" she inquired of one of these.

"Nothin' to know," was the somewhat indifferent answer.

"Out in town, I s'pose. Everybody's there.

"I want to talk to the men up from the lower chambers!" she said, slipping a gold piece into his hand, from a well-filled purse.

Was the anxious, the growing suddenly quite civil.

"As I thought, I'll have to do some bribing," she said, and then, "But, Old Tom-cat, I believe that I can blame them. They didn't hire to fight for us."

She went to the office, where she paced restlessly back and forth until the miners put in an appearance.

"I heard that there were only six of them, and she had expected to be greeted by more than a dozen.

"They all told me that the Tom-cat didn't know, to-day, count of the excitement," one of them explained, in reply to her questioning look.

"Well, I only found out a'bout a week ago, and I a'nt so much to work," he added, with a shrug.

"This is just right!" she answered. "It will not be forgotten by Mr. Brentwood—if he is still living!"

"Your employer is in trouble; and if I'm much mistaken, I can rely on you to add to them."

The trustful look that accompanied the statement could not fail to make an impression on the most callous of her customers; and she added, "Of course I don't expect you to do this for nothing. You were not hired to fight, but to make money. Here is fifty dollars; will you do it for me, and I'll give you a present, and I'll keep you here till the end of the month; and if you do, I'll pay you a dollar every hour."

"Each of you beg, buy or borrow a Winchester rifle. I will pay the bills, whatever they are. Our arms must be solid, and if you can't, or can't do anything get them; and all the arms and ammunition you can collect beside; and meet me here within an hour."

She resembled a veritable queen of tragedy, as she gave these orders, and with that she left them, and hurried to Molly's assistance.

Together they visited the mothers, wives, and daughters of the men they hoped to influence, and with tears in her eyes, appeals were made to the self-respect and pride of those women. It was one of the most touching scenes of the day, and in the course of the day the news went from mouth to mouth, and the arms were gathered as fast as they could be collected.

Gradually the joy indifference of the men melted under these combined assaults, and one by one they pledged their aid and influence.

This was not accomplished, however, until after the men had been in the prison, and many lagging minutes, filled alternately with hope and despair, elapsed before any combinations were formed to oppose the decree of Judge Lynch.

Then came to the troubled women the cheering news that they had made the most opportunely arrived from Silver City. The men had needed a leader, and here was one, a brave, fearless, and with the ability of a commander.

Curtis, as soon as he understood the situation, came, and met the women. He showed them the man who, after having vainly tried to rally a posse, had retired subserviently and hopelessly from the field.

The official answered the summons with great promptness, and came direct to the mine office, where Curtis had gathered and instructed the men whom the women had collected there.

The trial was not long delayed. They said they had very little time to lose. The formal trial was in progress; and the bloody decree of Judge Lynch could not be stayed.

The presence of Curtis, who was prominent and popular both in Silver City and Cataract, had a visibly inspiriting effect on the men. They listened attentively to his instructions, and when he was through greeted him with a low but hearty applause.

"Now, forward!" he cried, drawing his revolver and putting himself at their head with a shout.

With ready Winchesters they moved up the street at a quick run, swinging round the corner of the court house, and met the men of the Watch on the very moment when Taylor stepped from the stand and the murderous tools of Raoul rushed them.

Curtis waved his hand commandingly, his men swung into line with the military precision of veterans, and a rattle of clicking gunlocks ran along the closed rank, attracting the attention of all the street.

"Halt, there!" Curtis shouted, pointing his revolver menacingly at the men who had leaped for the air, "Drop them, or I'll order my men to fire!"

The effect was electrical. The fear-stricken sound of firearms that had but moments before they overthrew the chair in which Marberry, as Judge Lynch, was sitting in growing and growing danger.

The men, without a word, gave their August personage over and over in the dust of the pave.

The crowd shrunk and retreated before the line of threatening Winchesters, and for a time all was uproar and confusion.

"I have the assurance that these men are not guilty of the crime charged against them!" shouted Curtis, leaping on the box which the outside of the court, "Shame, sir, I say, on the cowards and conspirators who have been egging this thing on. There is no law but I won't take the same course if any other men were in their place, and I'll make them feel that justice is done. And that we will have, if it costs me to abundantly look over a dozen lives!"

No one answered him. Raoul feared to do that for the very thing he was also claimed to be seeking: and Phillips was quailing before those covert and unblinking eyes. Marberry had picked himself up, white and whistful, from the dust, and as soon as he could control his choking rage, ventured a reply:

"If I had known you who you are, I'd have cut your throat, and you'd have been the last to do it."

The crowd broke in in another voice:

"You are justly punished, sir. You have had the best of us, and we are glad of it."

"And that is the end of the matter," said Curtis, "and these are the first words that you have ever spoken to me, sir."

As for Curtis, affairs were still too serious at Cataract to permit him of thinking of returning home, and he was kept there, in the hands of the regular judge, these men broke into an involuntary cheer of encouragement.

CHAPTER XI.

AGAINST ODDS.

A PRELIMINARY examination before the county judge resulted in the release of the prisoners on bail. Curtis became their bondsman; and they were ordered to remain in the work of shadowing Raoul.

They knew, however, that henceforth it would be attended with more than the usual amount of danger. They would be not only under the surveillance of the Watch, but also under the zealous watch of the people of the town. Until this shadow was lifted from their reputations, they would be treated as if every man felt bound to regard with mistrust.

It was not a pleasant thought, but they did not think of anything else, and it seemed at least from the path of duty. Indeed they were the more determined and aroused, the greater the difficulty of their situation.

Work at the mine, they discovered, had almost stopped during this time of excitement. They discovered, also, that some of the women had taken sides against them. These were promptly dismissed, and their places filled with others whom they believed would be more loyal to them and their interest.

Curtis was given the power to control the men, or keep them at work. His own absence explained in a satisfactory manner, and thus explaining the failure of the work, the Sheriffs had been unwilling to call for an investigation.

Brentwood was not wholly pleased, though with the secretary's recent actions, and mentally resolved on some retribution which every man felt bound to regard with mistrust.

His first efforts were to counteract and break down the corded distrust with which the average man regarded him as a friend. This was no easy task, but he worked at it discreetly and unflaggingly; and was constantly receiving from the people of the town and the women of the town, and the farmers of the district, and the miners of the mine, an expression of confidence, which he found it hard to build on the belief that he was accomplishing something.

The Tom-cat was grieved, humiliated, and cut off by the friends who were so much his friends. Every reserved and dubious glance was like a knife-thrust and the repellent conclusion that he had stood by them faithfully in times of peril and suspicion and be could not do less than return the favor.

"Makes a feller feel jes' like goin' off an off.
Tom-cat's Triumph.

Molly Tenterden, though almost wholly uneducated, was a woman of much discretion and good nature, and the Tom-cat did not grin, or fret her to any suspicion.

Immediately after her husband's departure in hunting with Tomcat, she sent her chide-boy, a bright lad of ten or twelve, into the town, instructions to buy some gold gips, and bring it to her forthwith. She had a premonition that all was not right.

A week had elapsed since she had last heard from her, and four hours later she had a pretty well-defined idea of Raoul's plan. The reality far exceeded her fears.

She went to the boy, who did not answer the question, and he answered, "I have nothing to say, I am going to bed."

The truth only that accompanied the statement could not fail to make an impression on the most casual of the prisoners. "Of course I don't expect you to do this for nothing. You were not hired to fight, but to warn. Have you no money to take with you?" and she slipped a twenty dollar gold piece into his hand without objection.

"Each of you beg, buy or borrow a Winchester rifle. I will pay the bills, whatever they are. Our fate is in the hands of the law, and must be, or we can do anything else. Get them; and all the arms and ammunition you can collect besides; and meet me here within an hour."

She resembled a veritable queen of tragedy, as she gave these very words, and then left them, and hurried to Molly's assistance.

Together they visited the mothers, wives and daughters of the men they hoped to influence, and with tears, womanly appeals, rehearsed the story of their distress and needs. It was a sight to move men and angels—those women working so heroically, and yet so pitifully, in behalf of their men.

Gradually the joy indifference of the men melted under these combined assaults, and one by one they pledged their aid and influences.

This was not accomplished, however, until after the prisoners had arrived in the city, and some of the last summary measures, with hope and despair, elapsed before any combination was formed to oppose the decree of Judge Lynch.

Then came to the troubled women the cheering news that they had most opportunely arrived from Silver City!

The men had needed a leader, and here was one, spirited, brave, and fair, and with the ability of a commander.

Curtis, as soon as he understood the situation, put himself at the head of the matter, and the who, after having vainly tried to rally a posse, had retired sulently and hopelessly from the field.

The official answered the summons with great promptness, and came direct to the mine office, where Curtis was waiting and instructing the men whom the women had collected there.

The trial of the prisoners was over before they had very little time to lose. The farcical trial was in progress; and the bloody decree of Judge Lynch could not hold water.

The presence of Curtis, who was prominent and popular both in Silver City and Cataract, had a visibly inspiring effect on the men. They listened attentively to his instructions, and when he was through greeted him with a low bow. "You're a man, Mr. Curtis."

"Now, forward!" he cried, drawing his revolver and putting himself at their head with the words.

With ready Winchesters they moved up the street at a quick run, swelling round the corner. Of the fifty or sixty in the party, every man was in his place. Curtis waved his hand commandingly, his men swung into line with the military precision of veterans, and a rattle of clicking gun-locks ran along the closed rank, attracting the attention of every man.

"Halt, there!" Curtis shouted, pointing his revolver menacingly at the man who had leaped for the other. "Drop them, or I'll order my men to fire!"

The effect was electrical. The fear-stricken soundings of the guns brought back to the men their strength, and an August personage over and in the dust of the pavers.

The crowd shrunk and retreated before the line of threatening Winchesters, and for a time all was uproar and confusion.

"I have reason to know that these men are not guilty of the crime charged against them," shouted Curtis, leaning on the box where he stood, "and it is the duty of each and every man to do the right thing!"

"I am not saying that these are not guilty of the crime charged against them," shouted Curtis, leaning on the box where he stood. "But I must insist that you take the same course if any other men were in their places or I shall be held criminally responsible for what justice is done. And that we will have, if it costs the dozen lives!"

No answer was heard. Raoul feared to do it was that very thing he also claimed to be doing; and Phillips was quailing before those cheers a feller feelin' like goin' off an

"Makes a feller feel jes' like goin' off an
Tom-cat’s Triumph.

CHAPTER XIII.
A RABELLrial AFFAIR.

The next morning a strange rumor spread through the town that Taylor had mysteri-
ously disappeared. The fact that he was not to be found in his usual haunts had aroused comment and led to the report which revealed the fact that he had disappeared.

Ordinarily the disappearance of such a man would have been regretted; but it had been well known that he was to be principal witness in the coming trial; and the fact that he had been seen the last night in some of the places where the crime was full of mystery added to the grave suggestion.

Suspicion naturally pointed to Tom-cat and Raoul, and in the latter case it was not hard to see that Brentwood and Tom-cat, and open in their declarations that they were the authors of the disappearance.

In the course of an hour they succeeded in creating such a stir that a party was organized to go in search of the men and to ascertain the town and surrounding country for the missing man. This was the moment which Brentwood had longed for.

Many of the best citizens also joined the party, and as for the accused men, who were anxious both to see fair play and to learn what had really become of Taylor, Raoul was with him, and the body they were searching for had been found, hidden near some drift at the river’s edge. There were two of the bludgeon in the rush that had covered the head, and a further search also revealed a bloody knife, on the handle of which were scratched the letters E. B.

These discoveries created the most intense feeling, for the knife was promptly identified as that of the luggage which the two had used in their secret meetings of Black Ivan’s Great Combine.

Such meetings were being held he was certain, and the crowd of spectators and of them nettled him greatly. But it was only another indication of the showliness of the man who had always been known as the King of the Devil’s Mountain Mine.

As the days fled, the people of the town, recall, and Brentwood restored his efforts to obtain some reason of Raoul and his associates, became more kindly in their attitude, and more lenient in their judgments.

This rendered the work which Curtis had undertaken vastly easier of accomplishment, and served to bring the Tom-cat again into sym-

pathy with his fellow-men.

The day set for the regular trial, when the latter, not without some apprehension, entered the court, high crime of attempted murder, drew on space; and Brentwood redoubled his efforts to obtain some reason of Raoul and his associates, became more kindly in their attitude, and more lenient in their judgments.

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pathy with his fellow-men.
CHAPTER XII.
A SINGULAR AFFAIR.

The next morning a strange rumor spread through the community. It was the mystery of a missing man, curiously
missing. The fact that he was not to be found in his usual haunts had aroused comment
and led to some theories that revealed the fact that he had disappeared.

Ordinarily the disappearance of such a man would have been matter for grave concern, but it was well known that he was to be principal witness in the coming trial; and the fact that he had been missing for more than a day was full of importance to the defense.

Suspicion naturally pointed to Tom-cat and Brun trout, and Brentwood was darkly hinted that they had spirited him away and murdered him. Taylor had not taken the trip to Cat's Camp, and had never left the town for a day, hence it was not at all likely he was absent on a
trip to Silver Fork.

"I don't like the looks of it," said Brentwood, when the rumor reached him. "There is some way of doing it, but it can't be done. Do you see what I mean?"

"I see it all," said the lawyer. "It can be done, and it will be done."

There were a number of the Sanbornians who took part in the de

Many of the best citizens also joined the party, as well as members of the accused group. They were anxious to show their ad

As long as the day lasted, Brentwood and Marion kept Taylor company. They reached the town and surrounding country for the missing

The constant stopping of the car, to examine the scene, to search for clues, and to confer with the local authorities, made the journey a slow one, and it was not until late in the afternoon that they arrived at the scene of the crime.

As soon as the crowd returned to the town, warrants were issued for the arrest of the suspected men, and within the hour they were landed in the inscrutable jail and closely guarded by a self-appointed bodyguard. It had been necessary, it was alleged, in order to keep them from being released by their friends.

They were denied a hearing, and were put into jail for examination, the same afternoon, and re committed, without bail, on the charge of murder.

"As for Tom-cat," said Taylor, as he was led along with the Tom-cat after this commitment, "he'll have to wait for his day. They're hell bent on getting him. And if I'm not mistaken, it's going to puzzle us to get out of this scrape as easily as we did out of the other case; although I don't know that I can say we were out of the other, as we hadn't had any trial yet."

"It's a matter of self-defense," said the lawyer. "The man who is being called up now is under arrest."

"But Taylor's got the right of it," said Marion. "As for Tom-cat on the other hand, he's been questioned, with sworn evidence. "That was your knife, shore enough," and they say they found it in his boot.

"That will strike most any one as a strong point, though it's easily accounted for. I lost it at Cat's Camp more than a week ago. I supposed at the time I had lost it; though now I'm sure it was stolen. You see, my boat was run aground at a yarn, though the finding of the knife will be taken as the very strongest form of evidence."

Brentwood was positive that the Tom-cat would be caught.

Tom-cat, I don't know. I've puzzled over that a good deal myself. Why should they? It's a mystery. But are we sure they didn't? Some one else may have done it; and they have taken advantage of it and laid the crime on us. Taylor may have had enemies, or he may have done something that they didn't like."

The whole thing is at present unfathomable, and away beyond me."

Brentwood and the Tom-cat had been able to follow Pink Phillips that night, their questions would have received unequivocal and satisfactory answers."

The gambler led the Miner's Rest at a rather early hour, and proceeded slowly in a round

Brentwood himself."

"The boys are coming early," said Marion, smiling and addressing the notorious road-agent chief.

Black Ivan laughed."

"Where the caucuses are, etc. They can seat the caucus as quick as any coyotes. We'll know in a day or two."

"They think the end is near and want to be in at the a

Marberry winced under this direct thrust."

"You may have noticed also how slim our meetings were when matters looked a trifling

But Black Ivan led the way to a hollow, where, in a sort of rocky pit, they could discuss matters in some safety."

A chain of sentinels was posted along the rim of this pit, and it thus became quite a secure hiding place.

The members of the Combine came in rapidly, and while all were there, a count would have re

"There was a smile on his face, a dark face, that gave it a look not at all pleasant."

"The life of a traitor isn't worth as much as that of a dog. Even a dog always stands by his master, and Taylor didn't, and you know where he is to-night."

There was a slight paling of some of the faces, but nobody said anything.

"Taylor was brought into the band because we thought he could do something for us. He's a practical man, and no one could resist the limited supply of whisky. After much persuasion, he was induced to tell the story that had been made up, but I'm afraid he's not going to be a great deal of him, and if he hadn't backed down just when matters got most critical, everything would have been all right."

"But he got the notion into his craddled brain that he was committing some heinous crime in telling the story, and declared that if he was put on the stand again he would give the whole thing away."

"You made it quite clear that we could not afford to let this blow up in your face, and that you were determined to keep the thing a secret."

"As it is we have even a better show for success, and I'll say this for you, Ivan, you are a hard fellow even more than he will the Combine."

In his manner in declining this warning was so strong and impressive, that an involun
tary shoulder passed through the ranks of the glaring culprits. They suddenly realized what they had never realized before, that Black Ivan was a man whom it was dangerous folly to trifle with.
Tom-cat’s Triumph.

CHAPTER XII.
A RANGULAR AFFAIR.

The next morning a strange rumor spread through the village. It was known that Miss Taylor had mysteriously disappeared. The fact was that she was not to be found in her usual haunts and aroused comment amongst the townsfolk, who led to the conclusion which revealed the fact that she had disappeared.

Ordinarily the disappearance of such a man would have meant that it was well known that he was to be principal witness in the coming trial; and the fact that he had been absent for a week was full of the vaguest suggestions in that grave suggestion.

Suspicion naturally pointed to Tom-cat and Raoul, but with some darkness it was darkly hinted that they had spirited him away and murdered him. Taylor had sold to Rentwood, the Tom-cat, and had never left the town for a day, hence it was not at all likely he was absent on a trip to Silloth.

"I don’t like the looks of it," said Rentwood, when the rumor reached him. "There is some mystery about it, but I can’t tell if it is a menace, that I am a loss to imagine."

Phillips and Marbery, and Raoul in a lesser degree, shared in the accusations of Rentwood and Tom-cat, and open in their declarations that they were the authors of the disappearance.

In the course of an hour they succeeded in creating such a stir that a party was organized to go out in search of the town and surrounding country for the missing man. This the coroner was induced to take charge of.

Many of the best citizens also joined the party, and especially those who had accused the men, who were anxious to see him far away and to prevent his return. However, the body was not found, hidden near some drift at the river's edge. There were blows of a bludgeon on the head, and blood on the beard. Further search also revealed a bloody knife, on the handle of which were scratched the letters R.

These discoveries created the most intense feeling, for the knife was promptly identified as one of those owned by Black Ivan, and naturally reached that Brentwood had slain Taylor to keep the latter from testifying against himself. They then searched the body there and concealed it among the drift, inadvertently casting the bloody knife away at the time.

As soon as the crowd returned to town, warrants were issued for the arrest of the suspected men, and within the hour they were landed in the inscrutable jail and closely guarded by a self-appointed jailer. It was said it was necessary; it was alleged, in order to keep them from being released by their friends. They were then examined, same afternoon, and re-committed, without bail, on the charge of murder.

"How can you look black," was Brentwood’s grim comment, as he was left alone with the Tom-cat after this commitment.

"And we are to keep him here for the rest of the time, and if I’m not much mistaken, it’s going to puzzle us to get out of this scrape as easily as we did out of the other one; although I don’t know that I can say we were out of the other, as we hadn’t had any trial yet."

"Likely that we’ll be called up till this affair is settled. Probably it will never be for, if this goes against us, there will be no need of calling it up at all; and if that’s through, the other will probably be dropped."

The fact that he was now Tom-cat questioned, with sudden earnestness. "That was your knife, shore; muff; and they say they found it in the box--"

"That will strike most any one as a strong point, though it’s easily accounted for. I lost that box up and off, and if they touched it, though I’m not sure it was stolen. You see, Tom-cat, I went a yarn, though. The finding of the knife will be taken as the very strongest sort of evidence."

He smiled, in a rather forlorn way, and looked over the barred windows at the red glow of the sunrise.

"But why should they want to kill him?"

"Your questions are too much for me this evening, Tom-cat. I don’t know. I’ve puzzled over that a good deal myself. Why should they? It’s a mystery. But are we sure they didn’t? Some one else may have done it; and they have taken advantage of it and laid the crime on us. Taylor may have had enemies, or he may have done something to offend them."

The whole thing is at present unfathomable, and away beyond me."

And so the Tom-cat had been able to follow Pink Phillips that night, their questions would have received unequivocal and satisfactory answers.

The gambler led the Miners’ Rest at a rather early hour, and proceeded slowly and in a roundabout way to the near-by town. They were not met by the brisker way that met them by the suburbs, he was met by Jim Marbery. Here they were shortly joined by others, among whom was the young gambler himself.”

"Hey, young fellows, there’s boys coming early!" said Marbery smiling and addressing the notorious road-agent chief.

Black Ivan laughed.

"Where the carcasses are, etc. They can scent the carrion as quick as any coyotes. We’ll all be in the front of the head, of course they can, but prefer that others should do the bush wheeling and theory fighting."

Marbery did not accept this sort of pointed, axiomatic wisdom, and deftly turned the conversation to another point. A chain of sentiments was posted along the rim of this pit, and it thus became quite a secure hiding place.

The members of the Combine came in rapidly, and while all were there, a count would have revealed more than one as of all kinds of persons. There was a wholesome smile on his face, and the men. of all sorts and conditions who were with him.

"The life of a traitor isn’t worth as much as that of a dog. Even a dog always stands by his master, and Taylor didn’t, and you know where he is to-night."

There was a slight pall of some of the faces, but none of them could say the word, and Taylor always availed himself of the advantage of the time, but politely refused to say anything.

"I’m afraid we’ll have to let the corded blinds down over our heads, and because of the two or three days before the one set for the trial. "I’m up a stump, some way. Can’t get through this fight."

"That’s perfectly all right, we’ll have to bend our efforts to simply clearing away the charge against myself and the Tom-cat, I suppose."

Several of them were there, but the others were in the same condition. They were wearing the same clothes, and their shoes were the same. They were a sorry lot.

He is slippery an’ salt as I ever had to deal with."

"We’ll have enough to do in getting ready for this case. And I’m afraid, even in that, we’ll have to let you do what you can, and what you could wish. The weight of the proof is on the other side."

They swear to anything, and besides they’ve got this fellow, Taylor, who declares he recognized you before the firing began. Take my advice, Brentwood. Let Raoul go this trip, and get ready to meet the perjured testimony they intend to bring forward.

"But why sh’d they want to kill him?"

"Your questions are too much for me this evening, Tom-cat. I don’t know. I’ve puzzled over that a good deal myself. Why should they? It’s a mystery. But are we sure they didn’t? Some one else may have done it; and they have taken advantage of it and laid the crime on us. Taylor may have had enemies, or he may have done something to offend them."

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CHAPTER XII.
A RINGULAR AFFAIR.

This next morning a strange rumor spread through the town. It was a mystery, and quite anxious. The Tom-cat, of course, was missing. The fact that he was not to be found in his usual haunts had aroused comment and alarm. Taylor, who had led from the CSI, revealed the fact that he had disappeared.

Ordinarily the disappearance of such a man would be regarded as a matter of indifference. We were well enough known that he was to be principal witness in this coming trial; and the fact that he had been present at the man’s murder would have made the matter a matter of grave suspicion.

Several names of persons known to Tom-cat and of Brentwood and Tom-cat, and open in their declarations that they were the authors of the disappearance.

In the course of an hour they succeeded in creating such a stir that a party was organized to go out and look for and to get a search of the town and surrounding country for the missing man. This the coroner was induced to take charge of.

Many of the best citizens also joined the party, and it was the accusation of the accused men, who were anxious both to see fair play and to learn what had really become of Taylor. One of the first things that was found, hidden near some drift at the river’s edge. There were blows of a bludgeon on the head, and over the head, and the further search also revealed a bloody knife, on the bade of which were scratched the letters B.

The coroner’s men who had searched the tractor and left the town to search the country.

As soon as the crowd returned to town, warrants were issued for the arrest of the suspected men, and within the hour they were landed in the insinuous jail and closely guarded by a self-appointed sheriff. It was necessary; it was, as it was, in order to keep them from being released by their friends.

They were held for examination the same afternoon, and re-committed, without bail, on the charge of murder.

Racially dated, "Adam was to look black," was Brentwood’s grim comment, as he was left alone with the Tom-cat after this commitment. Brentwood’s man he felt the strain of the times, and if I’m not much mistaken, it’s going to puzzle us to get out of this scrape as easily as we did out of the other one; although I don’t know that I can say we were out of the other, as we hadn’t had any trial yet.

"Likely that he was called up in this affair is settled. Probably it never will be; for if this goes against us, there will be no need of us. Our only trouble is, if we’re taken through, the other will probably be dropped."

Brentwood closed the Tom-cat questioned, with sudden earnestness. "That was your knife, shore muff; and they say they found it this morning."

"That will strike most any one as a strong point, though it’s easily accounted for. I lost it in the cabin about a week ago. I supposed at the time I had lost it; though now I’m sure it was stolen. You can’t base a yarn on it."

"The finding of the knife will be taken as the very strongest sort of evidence. I tell you, Tom-cat, as an old detective, I could admire that sort of shrewdness, but I find it impossible to do so as a matter of practice."

He smiled, in a rather forlorn way, and looked over the barred windows at the red glow of the sunsets.

"But why should they want to kill him?"

"Your questions are too much for me this evening, Tom-cat. I don’t know. I’ve puzzled over that good devil myself. Why should they? It’s a mystery. But are we sure they didn’t? Some one else may have done it; and they have taken advantage of it and laid the crime on us. Taylor may have had enemies, or he may have been suspicious of us."

The whole thing is at present unaccountable, and away beyond me."
"We have our enemies just where we want them," he continued, after carefully noting the effect of his words. "They will never leave the house for a week or two. It seems as if their eyes may attempt to surreptitiously, knowing that they can hope for nothing now from a trial. I am afraid the man will not come near you for a long time."

The committee now guarding the jail, is composed largely of our own men, and I have gone up to see what they are up to. They are getting that thing out, they are to be shot down without mercy.

"That can be easily done," and the blame for the further course of events is thrown upon us. They are getting too strong for us. We must be foolish enough to try to escape punishment in that way.

"As for you, I want you to do as you have been doing—work hard, be consistent, and see that you are doing it."

He paused, descended from the stone to indicate that he meant business, then asked, and, if any one there had any ideas or opinions which he wished to express.

No one replied; there were no ideas, opinions, or criticisms. They seemed to be afraid of the jail. They were there expecting to stay, except of their own free will, is about as silly a thing as I ever heard of.

"Thus for you, I want you to do as you have been doing—work hard, be consistent, and see that you are doing it."

As for you, I want you to do as you have been doing—work hard, be consistent, and see that you are doing it."

He paused, descended from the stone to indicate that he meant business, then asked, and, if any one there had any ideas or opinions which he wished to express.

No one replied; there were no ideas, opinions, or criticisms. They seemed to be afraid of the jail. They were there expecting to stay, except of their own free will, is about as silly a thing as I ever heard of.

"Thus for you, I want you to do as you have been doing—work hard, be consistent, and see that you are doing it."

He paused, descended from the stone to indicate that he meant business, then asked, and, if any one there had any ideas or opinions which he wished to express.

No one replied; there were no ideas, opinions, or criticisms. They seemed to be afraid of the jail. They were there expecting to stay, except of their own free will, is about as silly a thing as I ever heard of.

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No one replied; there were no ideas, opinions, or criticisms. They seemed to be afraid of the jail. They were there expecting to stay, except of their own free will, is about as silly a thing as I ever heard of.
"We have our enemies just where we want them," he continued, after carefully noting the effect of his words. "They will never leave the trace of our names on the face of the earth, our names may attempt to surreptitiously, knowing that they can hope for nothing now from a trial, I say they will never leave the trace of our names on the face of the earth."

The committee now guarding the jail, is composed largely of our own men, and I have great confidence that they will be able to keep it out of the will. The committee now guarding the jail, is composed largely of our own men, and I have great confidence that they will be able to keep it out of the will.

"That can be easily done, and the blame for that will be justly placed on the shoulders of the individuals who were foolish enough to try to escape punishment in that way."

"As for you, I want you to do as you have been doing—south, or bitter sentiments, must th有一个kind. It can certainly be done now easier than ever. Keep it going—this talk about them having put Taylor out of the way to prevent him from testifying against them. It seems to take like wild-fire, and we don't want to let the people forget it for a single minute."

He paused, descended from the stones to indicat that I was to be cuffed, and went about it, then, and asked if any one there had any lones or opinions which he wished to express.

Then the business of the day was again resumed, and then a number of others; for who ever saw a gathering of men where there were not individual delinquency in every sense of the word, as they came out of their oratory? But they said little that had not already been as well or better said by their chief, and the question of the evidence of charged paper to even outline their speeches.

The meeting did not end till well on toward morning, and we all rode off crept to, the guilty things they were, back to the town.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DESPERATE RESOLVE.

The reflections of Tom-cat and Brentwood, thrust thus suddenly into the Cataract jail, were anything but pleasant. Their reputations, which had once been so good, were now more thoroughly jeopardized than ever. Even so fair a man as the new judge had evidently been swayed by this last charge and the array of testimony which seemingly supported it, and had refused them both bail, for incalculably, could they expect from the average citizen?

What cut deepest was the apparent ingratitude of the town, as evidenced by the vindication of its very existence to them. They, by the expenditure of a great deal of money, had opened the jail, and put up the officers andirmen, and would have had the jail a support of business on those desolate mountain slopes, thus making it possible for the people of the region to live there, and it would have been a fine thing against his father.

"You are ready and willing to kick a man when he is once on the down-grade!" Brentwood exclaimed, bitterly. "I don't know that we need to argue it at all, though. It's human nature. They would help us as quickly, I suppose, if we were climbing the hill, too."

"Yes, his nature!" the Tom-cat responded. "I've noticed that the buffler wolves alius jump onto the steer that's stumbld. But, jus' the same sentiment."

"We'll have to grin and bear it," said Brentwood, smiling in spite of himself, as he noticed the abysmal expression on the face of his friend. They could make no complaints of the usage accorded them, for all the world was also against them, and he had already shown his friendship in many ways. But he was virtually fettered by the confederation, and he guarded the jail. Against he had expressed his strong disapprobation; but the expression only served to emphasize the bond that bound him to his friends, his friends were his enemies, weakened his influence and strengthened that of the committee.

"You see," he went on, supporting the force of the secret, Combine, and the sheriff became virtually powerless in his hands."

"But what of yore remained true to their old allegiance in spite of appearances and the machinations of evil men, and none of them could false young Curtiss worked diligently by night and by day.

He knew he was constantly shadowed by themselves. The Tom-cat's tools and that his life was in continual peril, but he did not suffer this to hinder his efforts or weaken his resolves.

Brentwood, from whose mind the weight of all knowledge of the efforts being put forth in their behalf. The knowledge encouraged Brentwood, but it also made him feel a little more anxious.

"I tell ye, he can't do anything!" the latter exclaimed, with frequent emphasis. "Can't you get him a m'anz'in', but we have must have 'm organifi' ef we air ever to git out o' yer. It needs a man that do the thing."

The statement was made on the evening of the second day of their imprisonment.

Tom-cat's confidence slightly after his incarceration, and this restlessness had constantly increased, until now he could hardly remain seated at a table. After this last talk he had paced up and down the narrow confines of the cell, trying to find a way out of Brentwood's present predicament.

"I tell ye it needs a man who kin do the shad-buzziness," said Brentwood, after one of these long silences. "They ain't no other way; an' I've thought the thing over in every shape and form of it. It's nearly only way to untangle this picket-rope to cut it out."

"I don't know that I fully understand," was Brentwood's reply to this sudden outburst. "Who are we to get to do the shadow trick? As you say, Curtiss is hardly equal to it, however willing he may be."

"You, or me."

"Break jail, you mean."

"That's what I mean."

"I don't think it is at all advisable."

"Then we'll stay yer a'n hang."

"Ain't no hangin' without a rope to break out. Besides, I don't like the idea of jail-breaking. It looks too much as if we were afraid to meet the charges against us."

"Well, by rights, you're the folie to do the shad-buzziness, I don't say you ought to, unless you think you've any kind o' sense in stayin' in yer an' lettin' that rascal Raoult get us. Raoult ain't the man to cheat, and you'd do the trick better any one else, that's all."

"That is to say, if I must undertake it, you will?"

"You bet! I don't low for both o' us to be tryin' to git out on a single rope. I'll do the job. I hate the shadd-buzziness same's a dog hates snakes; but when it's time to be done, I'll do the job."

"And what do you hope to accomplish, Tom-cat?" Brentwood questioned, in a more serious tone.

"I know 'bout the guards layin' out yer, an' it may be that I'll git shot. If I don't, though, I want to git out o' yer, I'm goin' to git out o' yer by jezlayin' still an' lettin' some other feller do the work for us. We've got to git the leaders of this Combine by the heels. Ef I'm a a fishin' trip, they meetin' place the real' be easy ridin'."

"That's the truth. From our past experience in this sort of thing."

"What's been done once kin be done again! They're a-meetin' ever' night; that I'm shore of, there's another point! What's to become of me, if you break out?"

"Oh, that's all right!" noticing that there was banty in the tone.

"But, seriously! It will make my row a good deal harder, though, of course, I care for that. If you were to make out, I would be willing to pay anything you would say, go, by all means, and take all the moral standing to it. I'm to one all up with the fellow you leave behind. Your friends couldn't be taken as anything else than a confession of defeat."

"No; I spoke not. But if I can make any headway this way, I will take my chances with ye, of for hang it."

"But if you're killed?"

"If I am, I can't be in a much wuss fix, no way ye kin figger it!"

"That's true! But, you won't go under, Tom-
We have our enemies just where we want them," he continued, after carefully noting the effect of his words. "They will never leave the floor of the city. So long as the city lives, it may attempt to surreptitiously, knowing that they can hop for nothing now from a trial. I and the others will have to take it out."

The committee now guarding the jail, is composed largely of our own men, and I have great confidence that, when the risk has been run out, they are to be shot down without mercy.

"That can be easily done, and the blame for the murder of the jailers and the escape of the prisoners must lie upon the shoulders of those who were foolish enough to try to escape punishment in that way."

As for you, I want you to do as you have been doing—work hard, be patient, and be on your guard, and then, and only then, ask if any one there has any ideas or opinions which he wishes to express.

Brewton responded in turn, and then a number of others; for who ever saw a gathering of men where there were not individual as well as public delight in some way or other to make their oratory! But they said little that had not already been as well or better said by their chief, and they endorsed the official charge and paper to even outline their speeches.

The meeting did not end till well on toward midnight, when the people crept on to the guilty things they were, back to the town.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DESPERATE RESOLVE.

The reflections of Tomcat and Brewton, thrust thus suddenly into the Cataract jail, were anything but pleasant. Their reputations, which had been once more and more now more thoroughly jeopardized than ever.

Even so fair a man as the new judge had evidently gone with the last charge and the array of testimony which seemingly supported it, and had refused them leave to depose him, then, could they expect from the average citizen.

What cut deepest was the apparent ingratitude the whole town had shown against its very existence to them. They, by the expenditure of a great deal of money, had opened the way to self-government and independency of business on those desolate mountain slopes, thus making it possible for the people to live there; and therefore were in a sense to be held in court to stand against his father.

"We're ready and willing to kick a man when he is on the down-grade," Brewton exclaimed, bitterly. "I don't know that we're going to kick at it, though. It's human nature. They would help us as quickly, I suppose, if we were climbing the hill.

"Yes, his natural," the Tomcat responded. "I've noticed that the buffer wolves all jump onto the steer that's stummbled. But, Jas' the same spirit.

"We'll have to grin and bear it," said Brewton, smiling in spite of himself, as he noticed the embittered expression on the face of his friend.

They could make no complaints of the usage accorded them. They were also, as a matter of fact, and he had already shown his friendship in many ways. But he was virtually fettered by the conviction that he had to guard the jail. Against him he had expressed his strong disposition; but the expression only served to strengthen the chain that bound them. In the presence of their friends, weakened his influence and strengthened that of the committee.

They were, supported by the force of the secret Combine, and the sheriff became virtually powerless in his hands.

The days of yore remained true to their old allegiance in spite of appearances and the machinations of evil men; and even careful Curtiss worked diligently by night and by day.

He knew he was constantly shadowed by Tomcat's. tools and that his life was in continual peril, but he did not suffer this to hinder his efforts or weaken his resolves.

In the3 night, the Tomcat had full knowledge of the efforts being put forth in their behalf. The knowledge encouraged Brewton, but it also made him realize all the more what it was that they had to do.

"I tell ye, if he can't do anything!" the latter exclaimed, with frequent emphasis.

"Careful he don't catch us, that's all you kin do. I'm on you tight, and if we must have more organ'z in' we air ever to git out o' yer. It needs a man that kin do the work; the sindicated folk is too small."

The statement was made on the evening of the second day of their imprisonment.

Tomcat's confidence was completely after his incarceration, and this restlessness had constantly increased, until now he could hardly realize how much he had suffered since the day after he had paced up and down the narrow confines of the jail, which was as easily obliterated of Brewton's presence.

"I tell ye it needs a man who kin do the shad-breeze, finding Brewton, after one of these long silences. "They ain't no other way; an' I've thought the thing over in every shape and way, and the only way to out this picket-rope to is cut it.

"I don't know that I fully understand," was Brewton's reply to this sudden outburst. "Who are we to get to do the shad trick? As you say, Curtis is hardly equal to it, however willing he may be.

"You, or me."

"Break jail, you mean?"

"That's the thing," Brewton confirmed, "I don't think it is at all advisable."

"Then we'll stay here an' hang."

"And what do you hope to accomplish, Tomcat?"

"You know the guards layin' out yan', an' it may be that I'll git shot. If I don't, though, I know they ain't no way to get out of here but to git a train and a layer's help."

"It's a terrible risk. They are expecting us to do something, and they are watching for any hint,

"It's a terrible risk. They are expecting us to do something, and they are watching for any hint,

"Well, by rights, you're the fellow to do the shad-breeze. I don't say you ought to, unless it's what you think, but you're the one to do it."

Brewton smiled. It was plainly to be seen the Tomcat had determined to go, at every hazard, and that argument would be of no avail. His one thought was to effect some work since receiving the wound, and had experienced no evil results. But he knew the Tomcat's obstinacy, and made no mention of the fact.

"When will you go?" he asked.

The Tomcat was especially anxious to see Mollie and Jim, and when he saw the joy on Brewton's face, he knew how much she loved him.

They, with the tramp of the jailer, bringing them their evening meal, put an end to the conversation.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RESOLVE CARRIED OUT.

Soon after they had finished their supper, the jailer returned and announced that Curtis, together with the other two, were waiting for an interview.

Tell him we have good cause for not wishing to see him to-night," said Brewton.

"Under the circumstances it wouldn't do," he answered, when the wondering sheriff had departed. "If you break out here to-night, after they have paid us a visit, it will be at once surmised that they brought you tools to break out with. Curtis will naturally return in the morning, and then I will explain to him how the guards really fed us, and the official could pass to them anything.

The Tomcat was especially anxious to see Mollie and Jim, and when he saw the joy on Brewton's face, he knew how much she loved him.

Curtiss carried the prisoner to the prison-doors at the time of the incarceration, and after that hut, Curtis had spoken to them through the grating, but it was in the sheriff's presence, and he had known that none of the official could pass to them anything.

The Tomcat was especially anxious to see Mollie and Jim, and when he saw the joy on Brewton's face, he knew how much she loved him.

Curtiss carried the prisoner to the prison-doors at the time of the incarceration, and after that hut, Curtis had spoken to them through the grating, but it was in the sheriff's presence, and he had known that none of the official could pass to them anything.
"We have our enemies just where we want them," he continued, after carefully noting the effect of his words. "They will never leave the house, or any one within it, who may attempt to surreptitiously, knowing that they can hope for nothing now from a trial, I am sure."

The committee began to pass the resolution, but the will. The committee now guarding the jail, is composed largely of our own men, and I have great confidence in their ability. Their efforts will be to turn out, they are to be shot down without mercy.

"That can be easily done, and the blame for that is on me."

I've been told not to go on too far."

"As for you, I want you to do as you have been doing—nothing but bitter sentiments, most of the papers. It can certainly be done now easier than ever. Keep it going—this talk about them having put Taylor out of the way to prevent him from testifying against them. It seems to take like wild-fire, and we don't want to let the people forget it for a single minute."

He paused, descended from the stone to indic-ate our strength, to be carried out, and then, and asked if any one there had any ideas or opinions which he wished to express.

"For a while, we have been in this, and then a number of others; for who ever saw a gathering of men where there were not individ-uals so fully inclined to log out of their oratory? But they said little that had not already been as well or better said by their chief, and there was little of that charged up paper and every line of its speeches.

The meeting did not end till well on toward midnight, and we are pretty crip-pled by the guilty things they were, back to the town.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DECREASE RESOLVE.
The reflections of Tomcat and Brentwood, thrust thus suddenly into the Cataract jail, were anything but pleasant. Their reputations, which had been ruined by this, and which was now more thoroughly jeopardized than ever.

Even so fair a man as the new judge had evidently been influenced by the last charge and the array of testimony which seemingly supported it, and had refused them both and the livery, then, could they expect from the average citizen?

What cut deepest was the apparent ingrati-ation which Mr. Tomcat showed toward Brentwood and his very existence to them. They, by the expenditure of a great deal of money, had opened this hotel and an inn, and introduced the era of business on those desolate mountain slopes, thus making it possible for the people of the town to live there."

"Yes, "his father replied."

I've been told all that out in the same way," with a gesture which showed that argument was well nigh useless. "An" I'm willing to take the risks."

"I've been told that any one who would like a rai in a trap so long's I've got strength to bat an eye or move a finger. They ain't no use thinkin' we kin git out o' here by kickin' still an' lettin' some other feller do the work for us. We've got to git the leaders of this Combine by the heels. Ef I kin find where they meetin' place the rest'll be easy ridin'."

"That's the truth. From our past experi-ence it has been so.

"What's been done onc' kin be done ag'in! They're a-meetin' every night; that I'm shore of.

"There's another point! What's to become of me, if you break out?"

"Oh! "his father replied, "I'll right!" noticing that there was banquet in the toe."

"But, seriously! It will make my row a good deal harder, though, of course, I care for that. If you were sure you could accompl-ish anything I would say, go, by all means, to out of the way to find out what you can all up with the fellow you leave behind. Your fingers couldn't be taken as anything else than a confession of guilt.

"No; I 'spose not. But if I can make any headway in the game I'll take my chances with ye, of hang for it."

"But if you're killed?"

"I don't care about that. Ef I am, you can't be in a much wuss fix, no way ye kin figger it."

"That's true! But, you won't go under, Tomcat. I feel certain of that. What hurts me is the idea of breaking jail. I'm opposed to it on principle. It has an ugly look; though I won't sociably."

"You mean, the Tomcat don't even care what sort of suspicion amongst both or us, ef I wasn't shirin' for the best. I've studied the thing an' shouldn't much care what sort of suspicion I've got. If I win he don't care what."

"You mean you want me to leave the town?"

"No, of course not."

"I ain't got a very smart law yer on that. But I wouldn't think of going back till I was certain that it was safe."

TOMCA T'S TRIUMPH.

After they had finished their supper, the jasper returned and announced that Curtis, to-gether with several of the deputies, were waiting for an interview.

Tell them we have good cause for not wish-ing to see them to-night," said Brentwood.

"Under the circumstances it wouldn't do," he replied, "when I was last seen, when the wondering sheriff had departed. "If you break out now to-night, after they have paid us a visit, it will be at once surmised that they brought you tools to break out with. Curtis will naturally return in the morning, and then I will explain how we arranged to break out, in the presence of the official to pass, to tell them anything.

The Tomcat was especially anxious to see Mollie. But the latter was not there. Mr. Brentwood's reasoning, and said not a word in oppo-sition.

The shadows were now thickening in the dimly-lighted jail.

"If you mean to carry out your plan, the two of you, you will want the one of you to act as his own judge on the low bedstead with which their prison was supplied.

He disengaged the heel of one of his shoes. The heel was hollow, and from the bottom a little slot. He took a little saw. The saw had been: made like a watch-spring, and straightened with a loop, with which it was made.
Tom-cat’s Triumph.

with the greatest ease. A genuine burglar would have gone to work for two hours, unless he was closely guarded.

"You think I ought to use them, too?" grinned Brentwood, coying the instruments with a lock of doubt.

"Why not?" said young Grimes. "I’ve never the same reason that you didn’t want visi-
tors a while ago. They’ll think Curtis slipped them to me before, and wouldn’t be apt to believe that they’re in the hands of an expert, too."

"You’re right!" Brentwood exclaimed, replacing the articles and scrunching the base into place. "The police will do the rest. They needn’t mind. I’ll let them in, or I won’t."

"Well, he has got away; and a pretty job of mending his left for me to do, too," as he again menaced the door with a giant’s foot. "But not for the present. I can’t say just why I wanted to do such a foolish thing. It’s sure to make people think him guilty."

"That’s the kick out of the case," asserted Grimes. "And that’s why I didn’t wish to go. But, after all, I’ll know the Tom-cat. He will never listen to advice."

The escape of the prisoner naturally caused the two boys to disperse. They found it hard to revive the old mob-spirits, which Curtis’s storm measures had repressed.

A search-party was instantly organized, and if the fugitive had been caught he would have had little chance to show him. But the Tom-cat was shrewd; and though the night passed away, and the day, not a trace of him could any one discover.

CHAPTER XV.

Tom-cat as a Shadow.

A path was cut through the vegetation from the mountain scrub just back of the mine buildings. Be-

hind them was the head and form of the Tom-cat.

"Can’t say at I’m makin’ a scheme or vice o’ this business, so far," he stillequivocated. "But I think there’s a place up on the north’em. Seems like ever’body’s layin’ powerful low late in the Tom’s, and you can’t say for two days. And I that tuckered out an’ starved that I hardly crawl."

It was the evening of the second day after his escape.

On breaking through the line of guards, he had run straight to the mine buildings. Treadling on the grass, he had left no visible traces. The secretary followed the stream until he was within a few yards of the door. He then turned toward the bluffs which reared theirselves on either hand. There was a gulch at the back of the Mason’s Rest, and the Tom-cat had rested himself on a stone as if expecting some one. The Tom-cat crouched among some bushes near the water. He took stock of the movement of the secretary with great curiosity. Believing Fish was not likely to move for several minutes, he crept to the margin of the stream and enjoyed the first drink he had in fifteen hours.

He then returned to the scrub where he had left his red.

"If I had a good bite, now, I’d feel better, but that water’ll have to do till I see this thing through. I’s gittin’ most as excitin’ as a bear."...
Tom-ca's Triumph.

with the greatest ease. A genuine burglar probably could break in two hours, unless he was closely guarded."

"Yes. I think I ought to use them, though," queryed Brentwoolland, curling the instruments with a look of doubt.

"Why not?"

"I don't see the reason that you didn't want vis-
tors a while ago. They'll think Curtis slipped them to me, and an' wouldn't be apt to believe me if I told them anything."

"You're right," Brentwood exclaimed, replacing

the articles and screwing the heel into place. "I'll keep them. I'm not going to need them especially, though they would make the others think you're the man that's got the key and they might throw you off the track."

Bretherton smiled.

"As you see! He concluded he didn't want to stay in it and, being an agent of the law, the men could shoot worth a cent, anyway. He wanted me to accompany him, but I didn't care to go."

"Well, he has got away; and a pretty job of

mending he's left for me to do, too," as he again

slid the key into the lock of his door. "But, by my part, I can't care to stay and have it why he wanted to do such a foolish thing. It's sure to make people think him guilty."

"That's another thing that I'm not at all sur-

prised about."

"And that's why I didn't wish to go. But, at any rate, I know the Tom-cat. He will never listen

to advice."

The escape of the prisoner naturally caused

the officers of the local police to try and revive the old mob-spirit, which Curtis's storm measures had repressed.

A search-party was instantly organized, and if the fugitive had been caught he would have had little chance before him. But the Tom-

cat was shrewd; and though the night passed away, and the day, not a trace of him could any one discover.

CHAPTER XV.

Tom-ca as a Shadow.

"This is a path of the mountain scrub just back of the nine buildings. Behind them was the head and form of the Tom-

cat."

"Can't say 'at I'm makin' a scrumm' success of this bizness, so far," he stillquired. But he took a couple of steps, turned back to the others, and added energetically. "I reckon I got 'em. Seems like over-body's layin' powerful low late;

automobile."

"Yes, I reckon," said one of the others, "and say for two days."

"An' that tuckered out an' starved

that I kin hardly crawl!"

It was the evening of the second day after his escape.

On breaking through the line of guards, he had handed in to the Tom-cat the notes that had been gathered.

The Tom-cat seemed to search the papers for any possible result of the latter's attempt troubled him.

"Try the floor," he said, noticing the Tom-

cat.

The suggestion was immediately acted on.

The floor was made of plain boards, without turkeys, and the walls were framed with splits of cracks. Getting his fingers in a crack between two of the boards, Tom-cat exerted all his great strength. With a ripping sound, the board yielded beneath the strain, tumbling him heavily backward.

"I'm afraid some one heard that!" Brentwoolland exclaimed, starting to his feet. "You must be more careful!"

Then, as he looked around at the officer, you will certainly arouse the suspicion, and that will be far worse,"

Brentwoolland perched on the fallen man, mentally anathematizing everything within reach. "She jes' give all at one an' I plied my knife in a flash, and, to my astonishment, the things, to, they're a lot o' wooden headed dummiss that couldn't hit a barn-door of ther shuld try."

Brentwoolland dropped into a crouching position, and again attacked the floor. With one board out of the way he could go at the others with more success that densely involved little difficulty in prying them from their positions.

He worked with more care and caution, however, and in the greatest deal of time before he had a hole large enough to allow him to begin the task of excavating. Brentwoolland stood the wall, and at this place he began to dig with the big blade of his knife and a bit of sharpened spade. The ground was hard, as was the floor, and he burrowed into it with great rapidity.

"No; hadn't no' bloomin' success, that's a fact! Er could see Molly now, I'd git some

of the dirt out of her; but I'm on the brink of the dry. I low, though, they're a-watchin' that shanty too close for me to try to reach it."

The night succeeding the one in which he had made his escape he ventured into the streets of Canton, and then he had no more wish to cover from their excitement and attempt any organized pursuit.

A number of circumstances this visit was almost

necessary. If he hoped to accomplish any useful work he must have a chance of clothing and something of disguise.

Never was a woman so astonished as Molly, when he thus entered the house; and while he replied to her expressions of joy, he got out the articles he desired, together with some food, which she tied up in a handkerchief.

Then he returned to the shadows and fled again into the darkness.

All that night and the next day he lay hidden

on the mountain slope. From his place of concealment he saw an occasional party of search-

ers, but this did not affect him."

On this visit to the town he heard much about his own escape, but learned nothing regarding the secret movements of his enemies. Of his resi-

dence."

He had been unable to catch a glimpse of any of his former associates. He was anxious about this, with the circumstances just mentioned, depressed his spirits greatly."

"You can't make money, so much's to say."

"No; hadn't no' bloomin' success, that's a fact! Er could see Molly now, I'd git some

of the dirt out of her; but I'm on the brink of the dry. I low, though, they're a-watchin' that shanty too close for me to try to reach it."
TOM-CAT AS A SHADOW

A path of blood was traced back from the mountain scrub just back of the nine buildings. Behind them was the head and form of the Tom-cat.

"Can't say at i'm makin' a screamin' success of this bizness, so far," he still whispered. "But I'm gettin' a start, and in a little while I'll be able to make you a bed all around the edges of the earth!"

Across the door, he knocked again and again, until the feet were very tired and then he broke into a run and then he broke into a run in the darkness.

All that night and the next day he lay hidden on the mountain slope. From his place of concealment he saw an occasional party of searchers, but they went on in his own directions.

On this visit to the town he heard much about his own escape, but nothing regarding the secret movements of his enemies, of his residence.

Before daylight he retired again to his retreat in the mountains, and was now once more appreaential with the fact that he had found a safe place.

All day the burning sun had grilled him, and he had suffered greatly from hunger and thirst, and then he pushed his way to the deserted slope.

He had been unable to catch a glimpse of any of his enemies, but he knew that this, with the circumstances just mentioned, depressed his spirits.

"No; hadn't makin' no bloomin' success, that's a fact. I'd 've said to Molly now, I'd git some more of the dry stuff!" he complained to himself. But he was silent when he called to his companions, who lay just before him. No light was visible, and it struck him as being a little strange that any light should be in the office at that hour without a light.

"Reckon it can't be burglars," he muttered, as he crept silently to a point where he could get a better view of the building. The noise ceased, as though the door had been closed. The man who had been in the office could not have left it without attracting his notice.

It was quite dark, but he could see the figures of eight men in the background of the sky revealed objects to him with more or less distinctness.

The door swung open, and the big man and the thin man closed slowly forward until the walls of the building were just before his face. Then he arose, stepped forward, and took hold of one of the unbarred windows, and peered in.

He saw the secretary, who was moving toward the door of the office."

"Only Fish?" he smirked. "An' I was fool enough to how it might be burglars."

"But I was going to see you in the office."

The eyes of the prisoner naturally caused the somewhat stupid-looking man to revert to the revile of the old mob-spirit, which Curtiss's storm measures had repressed.

A search-party was instantly organized, and if the fugitive had been caught he would have had little chance to show him. But the Tom-cat was shrewd, and though the night passed away, and the day, not a trace of him could any one discover.

CHAPTER XV.

TOM-CAT'S TRIUMPH.

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with the greatest ease. A genuine burglar would not work himself to this height for two hours, unless he was closely guarded."

"You think I ought to use them, though?"" He could see the instruments with a lock of doubt.

"Why not?"" Tom-cat replied firmly. "You're right!" Brentwood exclaimed, releasing the articles and scribbling the heel into place. "The keys! They're in the pocket of the coat I took off of you."

"You're right!" Brentwood asserted, explaining the article and scribbling the heel into place. "All the keys! Brentwood exclaimed, releasing the instruments with more trouble to break out of this than out of a stout dry-goods box."

Tom-cat threw his knife,"" he said, ""and I'll begin right away now."

He relaxed the bar before him with the strong blade, and in a few minutes had severed it. Then he cut through another and another, until a sufficient number to permit the passage of his body had been loosened at the point nearest him.

"I leave 'tender ends for a little while,"" he said, ""as he surveyed the work in the gathering gloom. "The sheriff must take a notion to give us a chance, and open the door--or is that his gittin' himself into trouble by knowin' of it?"

But the sheriff did not come, and when an hour had passed the Tom-cat again attacked the bond.

A strong, wrenching pull was all that was now necessary to remove them, and when they had been displaced he crawled through the opening.

The task had been quite easy, but he found it a trifle more difficult to walk the walls with his knife, finely though they were.

Brentwood had scarcely spoken since the commencegment of the enterprise. "The boy,"" said he, bowing his head and carefully moving the movements of his friend. He knew the perils that awaited the head of the party in the event of the failure of the latter's attempt troubled him.

"Try the floor,"" he said, noticing the Tom-cat's expression.

The suggestion was immediately acted on. The floor was made of plain boards, without trusses, and its surface broken up with a number of cracks. Getting his fingers in a crack between two of the boards, Tom-cat exerted all his strength. With a ripping sound, the board yielded beneath the strain, tumbling him heavily backward.

"I'm afraid some one heard that!" Brentwood exclaimed, starting to his feet. "You must be more careful."

"There are some of the fallen men, mentally astoanishing everything within reach. "She jes' give all at onc' an'plied me, but he turned his head away from me, and they, there's a lot o' wooden-headed dummies that couldn't hit a barn-door of their shd't try,""

"That's the floor, and down it they tumbled, and again attacked the floor. With one board out of the way he could go at the others with more ease."

He worked with more care and caution, however. The great deal of time elapsed before he had a hole large enough to allow him to begin the task of excavating.

He worked at the wall, and at this point he began to dig with the big blade of his knife and a bit of sharpened board. The ground was soft, and he could dig with ease.

"It's a hole," he thought to himself, and when he was below the level of the floor he tunneled straight toward the outer air in a very little time. He then turned around, laid the large end downward, and knew his labors were almost ended.

He crept cautiously back into the prison for the purpose of hiding Brentwood good-by, and assuring him of his strong faith in the wisdom of the party. It was the last time he was an affectionate adjoint; and when the hurried words of farewell had been said, Tom-cat returned to the floor.

A few moments later Brentwood heard a rattling volley from the guards. The jail-yard became a scene of indescribable uproar. Amid it he caught the Tom-cat's wild scream of de- flame, and smiled as he knew his friend had escaped.

It was not long until the sheriff entered the jail, with lights and accompanied by a number of the guards. He was in a great excitement, and Brentwood smiled.

"The Tom-cat has escaped!" he cried, spying Brentwood, and noticing the hole in the floor and the broken boards around it.

"Then the Tom-cat's escaped!"

"Well, he has got away; and a pretty job of mending his left for me to do, too," as he again surveyed the work in the gathering gloom. "I just can't see why he wanted to do such a foolish thing. I's sure don't make people think him guilty."

"That's the Tom-cat all over."

"And that's why I didn't wish to go. But, you know, Tom the cat. He will never listen to advice."

The escape of the prisoner naturally caused the guards to wonder, and they tended to revive the old mob-spirit, which Brentwood's storm measures had repressed.

A search-party was instantly organized, and if the fugitive had been caught he would have had little chance to speak. But the Tom-cat was shrewd; and though the night passed away, and the day, not a trace of him could any one discover.

CHAPTER XV.

"Tom-cat as a Shadow."

A path was cut back from the mountain scrub just back of the nine buildings. Beside them was the head and form of the Tom-cat.

"Can't say 'at I'm makin' a screamin' success o' this business, so far," he still muttered. "But it beats a day's labour."

"He's a strange sort of man, is Tom-cat, to be so soft and so straight, that don't make a drop."

Seems like over'body's layin' powerful low lately, and ain't got no time to 'tend to nothin'," he said, "for two days! I' that buckered out an' starved that I kin hardly crawl!"

It was the evening of the second day after his escape.

On breaking through the line of guards, he had made his way to the woods, and made his way on through the woods, the furnaces, and the desert, till he got out on the very outskirts of the town. Seemed to be nobody else in the country at all, and he was just down that way he's got any call to see. Gee- whiz! What ef he's bein' standin' in with Raoul and Cinque in all this confusion?"

It was certainly a startling suggestion, and the Tom-cat's eyes opened wide as it came to him:

"Now, dear'up o' a thing I've learned this minute!"

"You can't see him."

"Don't see him, I know."

"Then what do you think he's down by them old ruins?"

"Of all plonk snakes, the one that strikes ye in the dark is the only one to appreciate what a great'ly excited, now, but he did not let his excitement cause him to abate his care. It raised him to a closer regard of the country, and the purser was perfectly right.

The secretary followed the stream until he had gone far enough to be out of sight of the town. Then he turned toward the bluffs which reared themselves on either hand. There was a gully at the mouth of the stream, which he crossed. He had made himself on a stone as if expecting some one.

The Tom-cat crouched among some bushes near the mouth of the stream, and watched this movement of the secretary with great curiosity.

Believing Fish was not likely to move for some time, he crept to the margin of the stream and enjoyed the first drink he had had in fifteen hours, and then returned to the spot where he had left the keys.

"I've got a good bite, now, I'll feel better, and I reckon I'll have to do tell I see this thing through. I's gittin' most as excitin' as a fish."

Just then the noise of advancing footsteps stopped the watchman in his tracks, and the next later two men became dimly visible. When they were directly opposite their voices betrayed they would have a certain play at the mouth of the stream-they were gamblers. Marbury and Phillips.

Fish rose to greet them, as they drew near, and his face close to the opening of the miner's rest, but the other purses which were spoken, and feared to try to get any closer.

Soon after other footsteps were heard, coming from the same direction. The watchman turned his head to the back of the opening, and waited for the gamblers holding their meetings.

The Tom-cat had hung closely at their heels, and then saw they had reached their destination. He sought for some point by which he might enter when it was convenient for him to seek before something of importance would be revealed at this gathering.

"Let's go,"' said the pastor. "Combs arrived almost immediately; and then the sentries were posted along the rim of the depression."

"I'll take close crowly to git down thru that an' I'low ef a feller shud' git caught they wouldn't waste many words over him. But it's me, Fish, don't hear the crowly that I is."

"If I was a lizard, now, or even a snake! Yes;"
CHAPTER XV.
BRENTWOOD HAD A VISITOR.
EARLY the next morning Salmon Fish arrayed himself in his best, put on his smiles, and took his way with slow deliberation toward the Cataract; jail. There was a crafty look in his eye as he passed the legations filled with pleased chucklings.
The jailer, having no thought of his duplicity, admitted him promptly, and ushered him into Brentwood's presence.
The latter looked up inquiringly, as he saw the form of the secretary.
"I have seen Tom-cat," Fish whispered impressively, as soon as the jailer was beyond ear-shot.
"Ah! you have?" Brentwood started.
"I don't know where he is, now, but when I saw him he was not far from the office. In fact, in the neighborhood of a river near the river. It was late last night. I had been at the office, looking over some books, and was just on the point of leaving, when a strange thing happened. I recognized his voice at once, and went down there, rightly surmising he had some important message to communicate.
"Where has he been all this time?" Brentwood questioned.
"Don't ask me, sir; I don't know."
"I want to see him badly, sir, if you don't seem to care to reveal that point, even to me."
"He only stated he had made some kind of discovery, and that he was desirous of being excepted from the ordinary course he was pursuing. He wouldn't tell me the nature of it; but insisted that I should visit you early this morning.
"How am I to help him?"
"He provided for it, and Fish took a roll from one of his pockets, "He said give you these; that you would know what to do with them; and that you must meet him to-night at the river, just near the river.
"When the roll was opened some jail-breaking implements were revealed."
"And that you must come out of here to-night and join him?"
"A queer smile flitted across the detective's face as if he comprehended why he had been discovered.
"Yes; I take it that's what he wants, though he didn't put his wishes into so many words. He said he didn't want to inconvenience you as soon as I comprehended what he was driving at he hurried away."
"Unfortunately, I wish he had told you more. It would help to simplify matters. I suppose that you will give the roll to Black Ivan?"
"I'm not sure, sir; I'm not sure;" Fish began, but he stopped, and lifted his position on a bowler. At this the Tom-cat drew an involuntary breath of relief. He knew, now, where the fellow was; and consequently had no fear of crawling into his open arms.
"He remained quiet a moment, after making this discovery. It was a fact, as far as he could learn, that the man was away from the place, bearing so as to pass through the open space between the sentries. This he succeeded in doing; and at 10 o'clock, I called a part of my guards, and he slipped away among the rocks on the very verge of the pit in which the meeting was being held.
"Was that all you said to him?" Brentwood asked, in a hushed tone, and Black Ivan indicated a desire to say a few words.
"I believe they were short, but revealed the fact that every point where it was thought the Tom-cat might make his appearance was being closely watched."
"Disappearance was also largely counted on to the benefit of Black Ivan's. But they now regarded as wholly in their power. With the Tom-cat slain and his body concealed there was nothing for them to fear. They had left the key, trusting, knowing he would be found guilty if brought to trial; and the belief would react to their advantage.
"One thing was brought out in the long discussion to which the Tom-cat was an interes-
tant party. It was this: an effort was still to be made to induce Brentwood to break jail.
"The unsuspected watcher scarcely moved until the day of Brentwood's arrest, when he was at liberty, taking the hand and the last echoing footstep died away. Then he crept to the window."
"I attended an interview with Clipper."

CHAPTER XVI.
A LANDED FISH.
HUNGRY was driving the Tom-cat to desperation. He was determined that the secret must be revealed. He resolved that he would obtain something to eat at all hazards.
"Now of course I see Cliff Curtis as soon as possible, but his hungry cravings demanded immediate redress."
"When he reached the town it was almost midnight, but a number of the stores and eating-houses still remained open. He boldly entered, pulling his hat well over his eyes before doing so. The tables were crowded, and he had to make his way through a crowd before he came forward to attend to his wants utterly failed to recognize him.
"Gimme a lot of crackers, an' some bologna," he requested, giving his words as much of a dis-
guising twist as he could.
"Into the winter of the little grove near the mine office, feeling almost sure Curtis would pass that way during the day, and he could therefore hope to catch him before he should have any food.
"He was an especially dangerous point to choose for a place of concealment, but the Tom-cat had reached the conclusion that desperate measures must be taken or nothing."
"Taking advantage of the shelving banks of the stream, he, at the earliest dawn, stole stealthily into the winter of the little grove near the mine office, feeling almost sure Curtis would pass that way during the day, and he could therefore hope to catch him before he should have any food.
"Fish felt he had been right in choosing this place, and he went on to explain that he could almost hear the little voice crying for a fugitive there.
"As the morning advanced, the workmen made their appearance, and he had time to leisurely down to the office, with the nonchal-
ance and assurance of a man who is conscious of having always done his duty, and against whose character no word of reproach has ever been uttered.
"Fish felt he had been right in choosing this place, and he went on to explain that he could almost hear the little voice crying for a fugitive there.
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"Fish felt he had been right in choosing this place, and he went on to explain that he could almost hear the little voice crying for a fugitive there.
"As the morning advanced, the workmen made their appearance, and he had time to leisurely down to the office, with the nonchal-
ance and assurance of a man who is conscious of having always done his duty, and against whose character no word of reproach has ever been uttered.
"It will play them right into our hands, if we work it right," said Curtis, when Brentwood had told him everything. "They will lay for us, and we shall learn how much better than likely some of the leads we shall catch. I am almost certain Black Ivan will be there too, and you and I can work him, and so destroy the Combine at one blow."

CHAPTER XVII.

A Landed Fish.

Honor was driving the Tom-cat to desperation. He was supposed to make a move that would resolve that he would obtain something to eat at all hazards.

"Gimme a load of crackers, an' some bologna," he requested, giving his words as much of a disingenuous twist as he could.

Into the winter of the little grove near the mine offices, feeling almost sure Curtis would pass that way during the day, and he could therefore hope to get the attention and have a word with him.

"No, I can't see Curtiss. I'd feel all buck," he exclaimed.

When he had finished, he carefully placed the request card in the- box, berating himself for such an obvious move. Then, as he watched the trail leading to the town hoping Curtis might pass along going to or from the mine buildings. He feared he might go far enough that he knew were being so closely guarded.

But, Curtis did not come, and despairing of seeing any he turned back. He was afraid that he had been left from the dangerous vicinity, crawled in among some rocks near the river, and slept soundly until morning.

Taking advantage of the shelving banks of the stream, he, at the earliest dawn, slid stealthily into the little grove near the mining offices, feeling almost sure Curtis would pass that way during the day, and he could therefore hope to get the attention and have a word with him.

He was an especially dangerous point to choose for a place of concealment, but the Tom-cat had reached the conclusion that desperate measures required desperate action and that he would build anything. Then, the very fact that the position that was such an exposed one contributed much to the scheme, and he could ever think of looking for a fugitive there.

As the morning advanced, the workmen made their way leisurely down to the offices, the men-chains and the officials filed in, and the miners who were engaged in mining the ore to the surface, or who were dissatisfied with the conditions were absorbed in the business of the morning.

Fish made several journeys to the business portion of Cataract. He had seldom appeared busier: and the uninitiated observer would have been surprised to regard him as a model of business fidelity.

Two or three times the Tom-cat felt certain he saw the face of someone he had not seen in a long time. But, though many persons passed quite near the grove, no one ventured into it. As the evening came, Fish was becoming exhausted, when, after mid-afternoon, his thoughts were suddenly propelled into a new channel.

He had been watching the mine offices, and was advancing toward the grove.

"What's be up to?" the Tom-cat queried, im-
from one of his pockets. "He said give you these; that you would know what to do with them; and that you must meet him to-night at the river, just where the roll was opened.

"When the roll was opened some jail-breaking implements were revealed.

"And then go out of here to-night and join him?"

A queer smile flitted across the detective’s face as he explained, "Yes; I take that’s what he wants, though he didn’t put his wishes into so many words. He didn’t say, ‘Racoon’; but I’ve understood him ever since I comprehended what he was driving at; he hurried away.

"I’m not sure. I wish he had told you more. It would help to simplify matters. I suppose that when we first got him I wasn’t near enough there to put through a fellow in case he manages to pass the guards here?

"Black Iwan’s men?" and the secretary whistled, as a sudden fear thrilled him.

"Racoon’s men; and they wouldn’t be any danger that any of Racoon’s men would be there?"

"How could there be?" Fish protested.

"True. No one knows of this but you, and of course you wouldn’t tell them.

"The boys are dead, and the police have the place pretty well covered. But Fish looked at his employer as if he would read his very soul. But Brentwood met him smilingly, and he again promised to do his best.

"The detective knew from the very first that the sound of the shot was, and saw the trap that was being sprung; for he was cunningly laid. Why should the Tom-cat send him tools with which to break jail? In the heels of his shoes were far from pleasant; after all, the Tom-cat knew it.

"Fish was indeed deceiving the detective, actually opened the latter’s eyes to a fact he had already dimly suspected: The fact that the secretary was himself a member of the Great Combine.

"You have no reason to say such cruel things?"

Brentwood had been thinking, with his head bowed, and now looked up, to find the secretary’s face lighting up. "From this moment I try to escape. So, you see, it behoves me to be watchful. It occurs to me that you might have some special desire to get me to expose myself to their rifles as a target."

"Fish rolled over in a spasm of dignity i

"Of course you’re an honest man, Fish. Your name is not in the combine. It was we who put you in me to think of such a thing for an instant.

"But I will confound the devil. Tell the Tom-cat that I will cut him out, and join him at the river, as he has requested.

"Fish flashed with pleasure, and a sense of guilty triumph, and shortly after bowed himself out of Brentwood’s presence.

"The latter, when he was gone, called at once for the sheriff. "Send Curtis to me as soon as you can," he said, and the official exclaimed:

"What do you have and some kind of news. What did Fish want?"

Brentwood pointed to the tools that lay on the table.

"Wants me to break jail, so those fellows cut there can get a crack at me. Brought these things, and pretended that the Tom-cat sent them. As if I didn’t know the Tom-cat better than that?

"Then, a few words, he related all that Fish had said.

"As devilish a plot as I ever saw!" was the exclamation from the sheriff. "I’ll send Curtis to you, and I sincerely hope that between you two you can lay this seclusory by the heels.

"With you, perhaps; but he can’t be trusted with these tools. They may come in handy by and by.

"Le left the little apartment, and immediately sent a messenger for Curtis; and within a half-hour that cool-headed individual was crouched with Brentwood.

"It will play them right into our hands, if we work it right," said Curtis, when Brentwood had told him everything. "They will fly for cover, and the police can’t have them in the city when some like of the leaders will be at that point. I am almost certain Black Iwan will be themselves, and so destroy the Combine at one blow."

CHAPTER XVII.

A LANDED FISH.

Honor was driving the Tom-cat to desperation.

"I’ve been told," said the secretary, "that if I should resolutely assert that I would obtain something to eat at all hazards, I must see Curtis as soon as possible, but his hungry cravings demanded immediate relief.

"When he reached the town it was almost midnight, but a number of the stores and eating-houses were still open, and he boldly entered, pulling his hat well over his eyes before doing so. The tables were crowded, and the old man, in his slippers, had to come forward to attend to his wants utterly failed to recognize him.

"Gimme a couple, an’ some bologna," he requested, giving his words as much of a disgusting twist as he could.

"Into the winter of the little grove near the mine office, feeling almost sure Curtis would pass that way during the day, and he could therefore hope to get his attention and have a word with him.

"He was an especially dangerous point to choose for a place of concealment, but the Tom-cat had reached the conclusion that desperate measures require desperate language. He knew everything. There seemed to be very little thing he would ever think of looking for a fugitive there."

"As the morning advanced, the workmen made their way leisurely down to the office, with the melancholy and assurance of a man who is conscious of having always done his duty, and against whose character no word of reproach has ever been uttered.

"Fish like to cluck the life out of the reptile’s" the watcher muttered with great vehemence.

"He’s got more cheek and backbone than any of the old fellows; and I’m for keeping you think he was jes’ about the squar’st man that ever walked."

"There seemed a great deal of travel along the trail that day; and for hours the Tom-cat dodging a great many persons and the movements of the workmen about the mouth of the cave.

"Fish made several journeys to the business part of Cataract. He had seldom appeared busier; and the uninitiated observer would have been surprised to regard him as a model of business fidelity.

"Two or three times the Tom-cat felt certain he had seen a familiar figure in the office. But, though many persons passed quite near the grove, no one ventured into it.

"What’s be up to?" the Tom-cat queried, in-
It shall play them right into our hands, if we work it right, said Curtis, when Brentwood had told him everything. "They will lay for him, as I thought they would, and I'll be in with Black Ivan on the job, so you needn't worry about Black Ivan, and I'll get you the information you want, and you can dispose of the job as you think best.

And he left the little apartment, and immediately sent a message for Curtis: and within half an hour that cool-headed individual was closeted with Brentwood.

Gimme a couple of crackers, an' some bologna," he requested, giving his words as much of a disguising twist as he could.

"I'm not going to fill the order," he held a newspaper before his face, and pretended to be busily reading. Before entering, he added, as if discovered and attacked, he would fight his way to the street, and run for it.

"Then the package was ready he put down the paper, paid her, and hurried out. 'In a few moments he was out of the building, and was devoting a good portion of the purchased articles. Washed down with river water, it improved the most appetizing meal he had ever eaten.

When he had finished, he carefully placed the remainder of the case on the desk. "Now of I'd see Cliff Curtis I'd feel all hunk,' he exclaimed.

"The best man I ever saw he watched the trail leading to the town hoping Curtis might pass along going to or from the mine buildings. He feared that the latter was the path that knew we being so closely guarded.

But Curtis did not come, and despairing of seeing him that afternoon, he retired to the dangerous vicinity, crawled in among some rocks near the river, and slept soundly until morning.

Taking advantage of the shelving banks of the stream, he, at the earliest dawn, stole stealthily into the town, and was able to get a glimpse of the main office, feeling almost sure Curtis would pass that way during the day, and he could therefore hope to get a glimpse of him.

But it was an especially dangerous point to choose for a place of concealment, but the Tom-cat had reached the conclusion that desperate measures might not be too drastic after all. He would ever think of looking for a fugitive there.

As the morning advanced, the workmen made their way out to their respective places. The mill was in full swing, and by the time the张家口 was cleared off, the Tom-cat would be free. He would look for a place of concealment.

But he could see the life out of the ruffled mixer with great vehemence.

"He's got more cheeks on him than any man living among the Chinamen, I'm tattered and stiffened, you'd think he was on the squaw's man that ever walked."}

There seemed a great deal of travel along the trail that day; and for hours the Tom-cat followed it, and the movements of the workmen about the mouth of the cave.

Fish made several journeys to the business portion of Cataract. He had seldom appeared busier: and the uninitiated observer would have been inclined to regard him as a model of business fidelity.

Two or three times the Tom-cat felt certain he had seen those two roll down into the mill. But, though many persons passed quite near the grove, no one ventured into it. And after the occurrence last night, and after the accident with the tools, they might be caused by the tools. They may come in handy by and by.

He left the little apartment, and immediately sent a message for Curtis: and within half an hour that cool-headed individual was closeted with Brentwood.

"What's be up to?" the Tom-cat queried, im-
voluntarily placing his right hand on his re- arm, to be the traps this ratler’ll get struck, hard!’

Fish had no suspicion, however, that the Tom-cat would attempt to make his escape. He merely held him tight by the neck, and waited for the right moment to cut his way out. They hoped by taking a grip of his tail, and then letting him go, that the hind part of his body would be concealed. Then they would make a great outcry, and pretend that they had trapped the Tom-cat, and killed him to prevent him from making an escape.

"Hanged if I don’t do it!" the Tom-cat exclaimed, in a wild excitement of the situation.

Then he drew and cocked his revolver, and crouched low in the grass, directly in the way of the pursuers.

All unsuspecting, the secretary came on. As he stepped within the shadows of the trees, the Tom-cat suddenly leaped upon him, and caught him in his jaws. He tried to make a clean getaway; but it was too late. The Tom-cat had him. On the way to his den, the Tom-cat promised to use the best part of his courage, even to the death, to break his neck, and carry him back to his friends. He threatened the secretary with death if he didn’t let him go. He promised to return with an armed force, and kill him if he didn’t.

"Oh, no, Mr. Fish, Mr. Fish, you’re not just as well calved in’n’t as last, fer y’all have to!"

"Who’s you, is, if?" (attempting an air of a man of wealth and importance) a tall, plump man, who was over-six feet in height, said, parking his revolvers.

"An’ I’ll start ye wuss, if ye try to put yer claws on that weepen. Unbuckle yer belt an’ throw the hull thing into the bushes, an’ then I’ll let ye go!"

Fish, pale and nervous, complied with the command, all the while protesting that he could not, and would not, because he was being treated with such severity.

"That’s a knife in yer pocket; let it roll the feller over, and that will make a direct cut to the crick. Untie the painter from that skiff and toss it to me.

"Wh-why, Mr. Tenterden, you don’t intend to tie me, I hope?"

"That’s jes’ what I do. Such critters as you ought to be whipped and whipped plenty.

Remorselessness was useless, and that deadly revolver pointed full at his breast, flight was impossible. He was kicked overboard, and the Tom-cat, a little longer than the man over ever did, an’ I know I’d better not trust ye too fer on the present occasion. I’ll be back in an hour, an’ y’all have to stan’ it till then.

The two men were almost of the same size, and the secretary’s clothing fitted the Tom-cat to perfection.

As soon as he had inoculated the gun, he walked boldly into the bushes, giving a groan of his own humiliating reflections, and took his way toward Brentwood’s residence. There was, of course, no time to lose in getting to the secretary’s walk he hoped to deceive even the craftiest watchers of the Combine.

In his haste he mis judged himself. Brentwood’s residence was, luckily, at Brentwood’s residence. His surprise was great on learning the facts the Tom-cat had communicated, but he was ready to turn the new developments to account, in his usual ready manner.

He immediately accompanied the Tom-cat to the grove, and drew a full statement of the facts of the Tom-cat and the secretary off the lips of the craven secretary.

They remained in the grove until after night-fall, and the secretary was the last of the large company of the upper chamber, where he was left under guard.

"I won’t do to trust him too far," Curtis asserted. "If he should escape he might turn on us and spoil everything at the last moment. It seems probable that we can’t forget that he deceived you once, and would even now be working against you if fate hadn’t willed it otherwise.

When this had been attended to Curtis began at once to shape affairs so they would be able to fake advantage of the plans of their enemies. He gathered a strong force of well-armed men, instructed them as to what they might expect, and then moved in the further estimation of the grove near the river.

As the hour for action approached he placed himself, with his force, at the head of these men, and arranged the little force so that the groove was almost completely covered. Then he ordered the coming of Black Ivan’s assassins.

They came on two hours before midnight, creeping stealthily along as spies in the enemy’s camp. The faint beams of the rising moon but slightly revealed them and aided them on their way.

"Now is the time!!" Curtis whispered of the near his ear.

Then, rising, he clicked his revolver, so that all of his men could easily hear. His voice was clear and eminently suave. Ivan, who was leading the assassins, uttered a bitter oath and drew his weapon, an example which his followers promptly imitated. But they were paralyzed by the rattle of clicking gunlocks, as Curtis’s men arose from the grass and moved quietly into position.

"Surrender, or we fire!" Curtis repeated.

"Curses you! What is the meaning of this?" Roul said.

"It means, Black Ivan, alias Jasper Roul, that we’ve got you dead to rights, and that if you don’t come out and surrender upon your knees and at once you’re missed, you bloody brother of Satan,"

There was a ring of truth in all the keenest in Curtis’s voice, and the entrapped men could not doubt that he meant what he said.

The sun rose in the east in the hush of that morning. The rising sun revealed now that there was no chance of escape. Armed men, with leveled rifles, stood in an effort at flight or defense meant certain death.

Lifting his revolver, he discharged it quickly and fiercely, but the ten-sided bullet, driven with the desperate fired the contents of the second chamber into his own brain. He fell with a groan.

The greatest excitement instantly prevailed. Some of his followers made a dash for liberty, but were shot down while attempting to reach the ground, and the others surrendered.

The fallen men proved to be Phillips and Martin. They were a little crowded. When their hearts had been attended to, they were ordered, with those who had voluntarily surrendered, and in that condition were marched to the Cataract jail.

The body of Black Ivan, with his disguises removed, was borne to the same place, and left in charge of the proper official.

The news of the fight and of the circumstances accompanying it flew like wild-fire, and within a few minutes Cataract was stirred to its nethermost. The men, who had not already been arrested, hurried out of the town as fast as their trembling limbs would allow. The sympathizers cooled as suddenly in their allegiance.

In midst of the tumult the Tom-cat stole away from the scene, a shadow among the smoke and even from the beaming smiles of his beloved wife, Molly, and hastened to the chamber in the upper cavern where Fish had been left. When their hurts had been attended to, they were ordered, with those who had voluntarily surrendered, and in that condition were marched to the Cataract jail.

The guard stood aside, and the secretary looked up questioningly, as the Tom-cat entered.

"Yes, it’s ended!" the Tom-cat replied. "An’ Black Ivan’s dead. The rest o’ the crew ain’t. I let my friend Markerry at Phillips, who got sliced a little with bullets when they tried to git away. An’ now I’ve come to make my word good.

He sent the guard away and unbound the prisoner.

"Now ye kin go, an’ I’d rise to git out o’ this country jes’ as quick as you kin. That’s a wild man down-town, an’ ef ye’re wise ye’ll be in the hills inside o’ five minutes.

"Yer yer ol’ clubies, tosing a package to him."

"I reck you’ve done me the favor more’n paid fer back wages. Ye kin be thank full that reget away with a hull skin. Now go; an’ ef ye kin, try to be an honest man the rest o’ yer natural days.

He pointed to the mouth of the cavern; and without more ado, taking the bundle, darted through it and fled for his life.

Brentwood was promptly released from his humiliating imprisonment, and the charges against him were soon after dismissed. The death of Black Ivan also caused the contest cease against the mine to be dropped, and thus not a step was taken on the title to this valuable piece of property.

It was afterward discovered that Black Ivan, as Roul, had hired a clerk, or some one having access to the register's books, to make the false entries bolstering the supposed claim of Hazel Marberry.

Believing of its vicious element, Cataract became, in a short time, one of the most prosperous mining-towns of the great Southwest. The mine beneath the mountain yielded richly, and Tom cat and his pard are to-day wealthy men, enjoying the confidence of the citizens of the country.

Marberry, Phillips, and the other leaders of the Combine, as tollers in the penal mine, realize as a bitter truth that "the way of the transgressors is hard."
It's the truth.

"What a world of mystery was opened by this revelation! The darkness that had so troubled Tom-cat and Brentwood rolled upward like a billow, and every deep-seated suspicion seemed to swell and broaden, the substructure of our secret organization had been revealed."

"You're talking straight, fer it explains all the things, that don't. No wonder Brentwood was all loaded this hayer Raoul. That's why he was so quick in giving his side of the story. Raoul c'dn't appear at o' the meetings of the Combine."

"For general membership doesn't know this at all," Fish continued. "Only a few of the leaders. He was afraid to trust the secret further.

"And we, I'll warrant the hull town'll know 'fore morning. I'm goin' to ont'le ye now, an' I'll make you a bargain. I've swore to let ye go. I mean to do it, but ye've got to play fair. The minute ye commence buckin', I'll bust ye."

"I'll bust ye, or I'll shoot ye."

"'Cause you! What is the meaning of this?"

"The Combine is changing its policy, under the persuasive influence of the Tom-cat's revolver. Then Fish again permitted himself to be heard a world of mystery was opened by this revelation!"

"That’s right. Now, I'm goin' to hunt up Curtis; an' fer fear some nobody don't mean to be beat, I'll put a hot ‘kiler in yor yether."

"I'll bust ye, or I'll shoot ye."

"I'd like to, but I don't dare. You went back on your word an' give the other side away an' a man ever did, an' I know I'd better not trust ye too for on the present occasion. I'll be back in an hour, an' ay'll have to start it then.

"The two men were almost of the same size, and the secretary's clothing fitted the Tom-cat to perfection."

"As soon as he had inserted the gun, he walked back from the window, leaving this own humilating reflections, and took his way toward Brentwood's residence. There was, of course, nothing he could do except to follow the secretary's walk he hoped to deceive even the crafty watchers of the Combine.

"In his hope of being lucky, he reached, luckily, at Brentwood's residence. His surprise was great on learning the facts the Tom-cat had to communicate; but he was ready to turn the new developments to account, in his usual ready manner."

"He immediately accompanied the Tom-cat to the grove, and drew a full statement of the facts, then the secretary to the lips of the craven secretary."

"They remained in the grove until after nightfall. They were one of the largest of the upper chambers, where he was left under guard.

"I won't do to trust him too far," Curtis asserted. "If he should escape he might turn on us and spoil everything at the last moment, which would prevent us, but we can't forget that he deceived you once, and would even now be working against you if fate hadn't willed it otherwise.

"When this had been attended to Curtis began at once to shape affairs in such a way that people would be able to take advantage of the plans of the enemies. He gathered a strong force of well-armed men, instructed them as to what they might expect, and then urged them on in the further search of the grove near the river.

"As the hour for action approached he placed himself, with the special care of the head of these men, and arranged the little force so that the grove was almost completely surrounded. Then, as the sun went down, the coming of Black Ivan's assassins.

"They came from hours before midnight, crawling stealthily along in the enemey's camp. The faint beams of the rising moon but dimly revealed them and cowed on their wayward.

"Now is the time!" Curtis whispered of the men near his ear.

"Then, rising, he clicked his revolver, so that all of his own men could easily hear; and a wave of terror ran over his men.

"Racoul, who was leading the assassins, uttered a bitter oath and drew his weapon, an example which his fellows followed with a will. But they were paralyzed by the rattle of clicking gunlocks, as Curtis's men arose from the grass and moved quickly into position."

"Surrender, or we fire!" Curtis repeated.

"He sent the guard away and unbound the prisoner.

"Now ye kin go, an' I'd raise ye to git out of this country jest as quick as you kin. That's a.

"Yes, it's ended!" the Tom-cat replied. "An' Black Ivan's dead. The rest o' the crew was killed by Marberry or Phillips, who got sliced a little with bullets when they tried to git away. An' now I've come to make my word good, of what I said."

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"He sent the guard away and unbound the prisoner.

"Now ye kin go, an' I'd raise ye to git out of this country jest as quick as you kin. Tha's a.
It's the truth.

What a world of mystery was opened by this revelation! The darkness that had so troubled Tom-cat and Brentwood rolled upward like a thick black cloud, and the company was suddenly sent down through the roof, and the raft of vegetables was seen to be an empty one. We might have been in the middle of the sea, for all that we knew of the world. The raft was found to be a thing of the imagination. In the darkness that had settled down on the world, there was a great deal of mystery. There was a great deal of mystery in the darkness that had settled down on the world, and the raft was found to be a thing of the imagination. In the darkness that had settled down on the world, there was a great deal of mystery.

"Hang'd if I don't do it!" the Tom-cat exclaimed, and the huyết of the cow jumped up to his mouth.

Then he drew and cocked his revolver, and crouched low in the grass, directly in the way of that horrid-looking fellow.

All unsuspecting, the secretary came on. As he stepped within the shadows of the trees, the Tom-cat let go, and he shot the grotesque as clean through the head, and called out in a low but meaning tone:

"Throw up your hand, sir, I'll put a ball through you."

Fish started at the unexpected sound, hesitated, and even tried to get out of his own pistol.

"If ye see much as tech it, down ye go!"

He arose from the grass as he said it, still keeping the secretary covered.

"I'll shoot you to yer last, Mr. Fish, an' you won't just as well come an' do us last, fer ye'll have to!"

"Wh-why, you are, sir," attempted an air of surprise, "I shall not speak more than I'm driven to, or I'll murder you."

"An' I'll saddle ye wuss, ye out to try yer claws on that weepoon. Un buckel yer belt an' throw the bull thing into the bushes, an' I'll kill you before time."

Fish, pale and nervous, complied with the command, all the while protesting that he could not understand why he was being treated with such severity.

"There's a knife in yer pocket; let it follow the fall of the bull. When that yellow feline comes at you, strike the cutter from the painter from that side an' you'll toss it to me."

"Wh-why, Mr. Tenterden, you don't intend to take me, I hope?"

"That's j'as what I do. Such critters as you ought to be shot at."

Remonstrance was useless, and that deadly revolver pointed full at his breast, flight was impossible; he was compelled to march ahead of the Tom-cat to the river's edge.

Light shook, used by Brentwood for pleasure-boating, was chasing at the end of a slender, but strong rope; and this, the secretary understood, was the signal with which he pointed revolver.

"Now toss it hyer!" was the order, and the captive sullenly complied.

"Set down on that stone till I cut it up, an' say to them that ye made this yarn an' you'll an open fire on ye with the shotter."

He complied; and while the Tom-cat was severing the rope into proper lengths, remained on the stone, upright and rigid as a carved image.

He was so thoroughly cowed he offered no resistance when his hands and feet were tied, and, turning only anxious to propitiate his stern captor.

"Now will you tell me the meaning of this?" he asked mildly.

"I didn't know but ye moun't a' guessed. I'm up to snuff, Mr. Fish, that's all, I followed ye last night, an' know all about yer dirty meaness."

He seated himself in front of Fish, and with a speciousness covered the couplings of the horse near his hand.

The secretary became pale as death.

"Yes, Mr. Fish. I know a good deal that you wish I didn't. At the same time ef you'll speak up spry an' choppy I'll be too hard on ye to make ye tell me ab' O'Black Ivan's Combine."

Tell me whar' an' how I kin lay han' on that coon, an' I'll let ye go."

"I can't! I dare not!"

Fish protested, squirming like an eel.

"Oh, yes, I think ye kin. Fact is, ye're goin'

Fish glanced around with an appealing, searching look.

"Will you swear to me that you'll permit me to go free, if I tell everything?"

"Jasper Rascal is Black Ivan in disguise. For a moment the Tom-cat was stupefied.

"That's the truth, Salmon Fish!"

"Curse ye! What's the meaning of this?"

"It means, Black Ivan, alias Jasper Rascal, that we've got ye dead to rights, and that if ye don't serve my ends ye'll be seen tomorrow morning, side by side; you bloody brother of Satan."

This was a ring of truth. There was a wickedness in Curtis's voice, and the entrapped men could not doubt that he meant what he said.

"I'll tell ye my story now," he said, "and ye can have my sword, if ye like; but I'm a man of honor, and I'll not tell ye any lies except that I'm a man of honor, and I'll not tell ye any lies except that I'm a man of honor."

The rising moon revealed now that there was no chance of escape. Armed m'n, with leveled guns, stood in their effort at flight or defense meant certain death.

Lifting his revolver, he discharged it quickly and deadly. The ball struck the harried but daring man, and he dropped to the ground, and the others surrendered.

The fallen men proved to be Phillips and Maresby. They were captured in their own garden, and their horses were taken.

The greatest excitement instantly prevailed. Some of his followers made a dash for liberty, but in doing so they lost their horses and were taken. The men of the Combine had not already been arrested, hurried out of the town as fast as their trembling limbs would carry them, and the sympathizers cooled as suddenly in their allegiance.

In midst of the tumult the Tom-cat stole away from the scene of the tragedy and went back to the barnyard, where Fish had been left. When their horses had been attended to, they were shown to the Combine, with those who had voluntarily surrendered, and in that condition were marched to the Cataract jail.

The body of Black Ivan, with his disguise removed, was borne to the same place, and left in charge of the proper officials.

The news of the fight and of the circumstances accompanying it flew like wild-fire, and within a few minutes Cataract was stirred to its noth- mest. The men of virtue who had not already been arrested, hurried out of the town as fast as their trembling limbs would carry them, and the sympathizers cooled as suddenly in their allegiance.

'Ye're yer ela's, towing a package to him. 'Ye're yer ela's, ye've done made a hoop o' yer own to carry back wages. Ye kin be thank'ful that reget away with a bull skin. Now go; an' ef ye kin, try to be an honest man the rest o' yer natural days."

He pointed to the mouth of the cavern; and, checking the bundle, darted through it and fled for his life.

Brentwood was promptly released from his humiliating imprisonment, and the charges against him were soon after dismissed. The death of Black Ivan also caused the contest cease against the mine to be dropped, and thus not a shilling was paid on the title to this valuable piece of property.

It was afterward discovered that Black Ivan, as Rascal, had hired a clerk, or some one having access to the register's books, to make the false entries bolstering the supposed claim of Hazel to the estate.

Believing of its valuable element, Cataract became, in a short time, one of the most prosperous mining-towns of the great Southwest. The mine beneath the mountain yielded richly, and Tomcat and his purses are to-day wealthy men, enjoying the confidence of the citizens of the country.

Marberry, Phillips, and the other leaders of the Combine, as tollers in the penal mine, realize as a bitter truth that "the way of the transgresser is hard."
voluntarily placing his right hand on his re-
strains, he too would break him, and get a good
strike, hard, fast.

Fish had no suspicion, however, that the
tom-cat's intentions were not merely those of
visits to the place where the Combine expected
to trap Brentwood. Already word had been
passed around that he was a good-looking cat,
and a strong one. It was decided that they
should cut his way out. They hoped by taking
him alive they might have a chance to make
him a pet. But when they had finally trapped
him, he was concealed. Then they would
make a great outcry, and pretend that he
had been killed in an attempt to kill him to prevent
him from making an escape.

"Hanged if I don't do it!" the Tom-cat ex-
dclaimed, dryly, for he had caught a whiff of
the game.

Then he drew and cocked his revolver, and
crouched low in the grass, directly in the way of
its escape.

All unsuspecting, the secretary came on. As
he stopped within the shadows of the trees, the
Tom-cat suddenly sprang from his cover, leaped down
weapon, and called out in a low but meaning tone:

"Throw up yer han's, er I'll put a ball through
you!"

Fish started at the unexpected sound, hesi-
tated, and even tried to get out of his own pistol.

"If ye so much as touch it, down ye go!"

He arose from the grass as he said it, still
keeping the secretary covered.

"What in the world are ye at!" the sec-
ceptibly calm.

"That's j's! what I do. Such crippers as you
ought to know."

Remorselessness was useless, and that
deadly revolver pointed full at his breast, flight
was impossible. All that was left was to shield
himself with a point, amidst the Tom-cat to the river's
drained.

Dreadful flight, used by Brentwood for pleasure-
boating, was chafing at the end of a slender,
but strong rope; and this the secretary united,
with one hand on him, with pointed re-

Now toss it by yer!" was the order, and the
captive silently complied.

"Set down on that stone tell I cut it up, an'\nshe know j's would be done every time that
she mean to run, an' fire on ye with the
shooter.

It succeeded; and while the Tom-cat was
leaping the rope into proper lengths, remained
on the stone, upright and rigid as a carved
image.

He was so thoroughly cowed he offered no
resistance when his hands and feet were tied,
and remaining only anxious to propitiate his stern
captor.

"Now, will you tell me the meaning of this?"
asked mildly.

"I didn't know but ye mout' a' guessed. I'm
up to snuff, Mr. Fish, that's all, I followed ye an' night, an' I know all about yer dirty mean-
ness.

He seated himself in front of Fish, and with
one hand he fastened the couplet's collar near
his hand.

"The secretary becom the pal of death as a
dad..." said Fish.

"Yes, Fish. I know a good deal that you'll wish I didn't. At the same time ef ye'll
speak up sly and chippy, I'll not be too hard on ye. But you've got a j's of
Black Ivan's Combine.

Tell me whar' an' how I kin lay han's on
that place... I'll let it out later" Fish protested, squirming
like an eel.

"Oh, yes, I think ye kin. Fact is, ye've got
to!"

Fish glanced around with an appealing, search-
ing eye.

"Will you swear to me that ye'll permit me
to free, if I tell everything?"

"Jasper Raoul is Black Ivan in disguise! For
a moment the Tom-cat was stupefied.

"That's the truth, Salmon Fish!"

"It's the truth!"

What a world of mystery was opened by this
revelation! The darkness that had so troubled
Tom-cat and Brentwood rolled upward like a
cloud of churning mists. They could only
bemusedly stream in.

"You're talking strap, fer it explains
some of the things, that don't! No won-
der Brentwood was allus losin' this hyer Raoul.
For I know he will be the thing that
Raoul c'n't understand at any o' the meetin's o'
the Combine.

"Anyway, the general membership doesn't know this at all," Fish continued. "Only a few of
the leaders. He was afraid to trust the secret fur-
ther.

"Well, I'll warrant the hill town will know it
tomorrow. I'm goin' to onste ye now, an'
I'll shuck and circle, and you've to let ye go. I
mean to do it, but ye've got to play fair. The
mity ye commence backin', I'll be the one that
will draw a wharn; an' treat ye j's as I would a
hoss-thief."

CHAPTER XVIII.

Changing of clothing was quickly effected,
under the persuasive influence of the Tom-cat's
revolver. Then Fish again permitted himself to
be borne a world of mystery opened by this
revelation! The darkness that had so troubled
Tom-cat and Brentwood rolled upward like a
coud of churning mists. They could only
bemusedly stream in.

"That's right. Now, I'm goin' to hunt up
Curtis; an' fer fear somebody might not
be aware of the fact, fer his ye health, I'll put a
han' in der other.

In vain Fish pleaded to spare this humilia-
ting and painful ceremony.

"I'd like to, but I daren't. You went back on
your promise, didn't you? Va' man ever did, an' I'llow I'd better not trust you
to fer on the present occasion. I'll be back in
an hour, an' ye'll have to start it thence.

The two men were almost of the same size,
and the secretary's clothing fitted the Tom-cat
to perfection.

As soon as he had inserted the gag, he walked back from the front, leaving the
other his own humility to his head. He had
succeeded in making the secretary's walk he hoped to deceive even the crafty
watchers of the Combine.

In his heart he hoped the plan was, luckily,
at Brentwood's residence. His surprise was
great on learning the facts the Tom-cat had
to communicate, but he was ready to turn the new
devotions to account, in his usual ready
manner.

He immediately accompanied the Tom-cat
to the grove, and drew a full statement of the
Toms. He then told the secretary to
the lips of the craven secretary.

"No, it's ended!" the Tom-cat replied. "An'
Black Ivan's dead. The rest o' the crew is
hid by a fellow by the name of Marberry or Phillips, who
"Yes, ye kin, an' I'll see ye git out o' this
country j's as quick as you kin. Thar's a
"We won't do to him too far," Curtis asserted.
"If he should escape he might turn on us and spoil everything at the last moment.
Don't let that happen. But we can't forget that he deceived you once, and would
even now be working against you if fate hadn't
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When this had been attended to Curtis began
at once to shape affairs so they would be able
to fake advantage of the plans of their enemies. He
gathered a strong force of well-armed men,
instructed them as to what they might expect,
and sent them to the further part of the
grove near the river.

As the hour for action approached he placed
himself, with his back to the head of these
men, and arranged the little force so that the
grove was almost completely surrounded. Then
he waited the coming of Black Ivan's assassins.

They came in two hours before midnight,
crawling stealthily along like spies in the
enemy's camp. The faint beams of the rising
moon but dimly revealed them and alone
crushed them.

"Now is the time!" Curtis whispered of
the men near his ear.

Then, rising, he clicked his revolver, so that
all of his own men could easily hear.

I'm ready!" he said... the men heard.

"Surrender, or we fire!" Curtis repeated.