

WILD WEST



A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES Etc. OF WESTERN LIFE.

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YOUNG WILD WEST IN DEATH CANYON; OR, ARIETTA AND THE MAD MINER.

*By AN OLD SCOUT
AND OTHER STORIES*



As Wild and his partners reached the ledge they beheld a startling sight. Arietta had fainted and was hanging limp upon the arm of the Mad Miner, who was waving a flaming skull over his head. "Back!" he cried. "The girl is mine! Mine forever!"

WILD WEST WEEKLY

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Young Wild West In Death Canyon

OR, ARIETTA AND THE MAD MINER

By AN OLD SCOUT

CHAPTER I.—Young Wild West Hears About the Dangers of Death Canyon.

Young Wild West, the Champion Deadshot, Prince of the Saddle and well-known Boy Hero of the Wild West, was riding through a desolate canyon in the northern part of Arizona with Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart, his two partners, and the three girls who traveled with them on their trips in search of excitement, fun and adventure. It was toward the close of a September day, a few years ago, when things were in a wilder state than at present in that great section of the country commonly called the Wild West. So much has been written about our dashing young hero and his friends that it is hardly necessary to give them an introduction; but for the benefit of those who may not have heard of them we will say that Young Wild West, though but a boy in years, was in every other sense a man. He was a born fighter, and his strict adherence to the right, and his many hazardous exploits in bringing wrong-doers to justice, had made for him a name that many an older person would have been proud to possess. Courage, skill, daring, coolness, strength, agility and good judgment were all embodied in the make-up of the boy, and being handsome, and with the figure of a well-trained athlete, he certainly was a young fellow who was bound to find a warm place in the hearts of all those who have a fondness for reading of true heroism. He invariably wore a fancy hunting suit of buckskin, and with his long, light hair hanging over his shoulders, he made the true picture of a dashing young Westerner, who knew not what fear meant, and who was bound to do what he thought was right, no matter what the cost. This was especially so when he was mounted on his gallant sorrel stallion, Spitfire, a steed that had never been beaten in a race, whether it was for glory or life or death, and which possessed intelligence and endurance that was not known to the average run of horseflesh.

He had won the title of Champion Deadshot of the West when he was scarcely sixteen, and since that time he had held it against all comers. It was not strange, then, that the boy should take pride in what he could do; that was only human. Cheyenne Charlie, the scout and Indian fighter, though some years his senior, was proud to call Young Wild West his leader and adviser, and

Jim Dart, who was a boy about the same age as the dashing young deadshot, loved him as though he were a brother. The girls, who generally traveled with our hero and his two partners, were Arietta Murdock, the charming golden-haired sweetheart of Young Wild West; Anna, the wife of Cheyenne Charlie, and Eloise Gardner, the sweetheart of Jim Dart. Though Anna must have been well past the age of twenty, and married, at that, she was classed as a girl by them, and they always spoke of the three as the "girls." Our friends were finely equipped for camping out on the mountains and plains. They had with them two Chinese servants, who led the pack-horses that carried the outfit. These servants were brothers, named Hop Wah and Wing Wah, and they were typical of their race in looks and speech, though one of them was not half as innocent as he looked. This was Hop Wah. The fact was that he was far above the average Son of the Flowery Kingdom in many ways. He was really a very clever magician and a born humorist. Added to these accomplishments, if we may call them such, he was a professional gambler, and he liked the cards and dice about as well as he liked whisky, which he always spoke of as "tanglefoot." But any bad habits that he may have had were more than offset by his wonderful cleverness in assisting our hero and his friends in times of danger.

Hop was not a fighter, nor could he shoot with any degree of accuracy. But more than once had he saved their lives by his ready wit and sleight-of-hand. Wing, his brother, had once thought himself something above the ordinary run of his race, and he had tried to be a "sport"; but Hop was so far ahead of him in this respect that the moment he realized it he gave it up and settled down to be just what he was at the time our story opens, a good cook, who minded his own business and dozed when he had nothing else to do. As we have stated, it was toward the close of a day in September when we find Young Wild West and his friends riding through a desolate canyon. It was one of the parts of Arizona where vegetation is scarce and where bleak-looking rocks and sand are plenty. About the only living things that were to be seen consisted of three or four vultures that were soaring high in the air, no doubt looking for carrion that might lay somewhere among the rocks. Our hero and

his charming sweetheart were riding at the head of the column, as they usually did when there was no known danger threatening. Cheyenne Charlie and his wife came next, and behind them rode Jim Dart and his sweetheart. The two Chinamen brought up the tail-end of the party, the pack-horses trotting along after them. They were all in hopes of finding a suitable place to camp, and according to the young deadshot's reckoning, there must be a water hole not far away. Wild, as the boy was called by his friends, had been that way once or twice before, and so had his two partners. But the girls had never been, though they had been in many similar places.

"By the looks of things this canyon is a pretty long one," said our hero, as he shaded his eyes with his hand and looked ahead. "There are miles and miles of it, I reckon. I don't know the name of it, or whether anyone has taken the trouble to give it one; but it certainly is not a very cheerful-looking place. It is a good thing we brought along that bundle of firewood, for there is nothing around here that would serve the purpose of kindling a fire."

"That's right, Wild," answered Arietta, nodding her golden head. "We have water enough to last until we want to start out in the morning, in case we don't happen to find the water-hole you spoke of. But as you are certain that the river is not more than fifty miles from here, we could make out, anyhow. We have experienced such things before, you know, and have come out all right, too."

"That's right, Et. I reckon we can make out all right. We generally know what kind of a country we are going through before we set out, and if we can't get through all right I reckon no one can."

The canyon was a rather wide one, and the steep cliffs on either side reared themselves to a great height in many cases. Nowhere did there seem to be a chance to leave it, so that meant that they must proceed straight on.

"When we went through here once afore, Wild, we struck a gang of crooks," said Cheyenne Charlie, as they rode on their way. It was quite a lively time we had with 'em fer a while; but they soon found that we wasn't no tenderfoot crowd."

"Yes, Charlie, I remember," was the reply. "That was about a year ago, if I remember right."

"Jest about. There wasn't no name ter ther canyon then, so it ain't likely there is now."

"What's that you say, my friend? No name to the canyon, eh? Well, that is where you make a mistake."

The voice came from behind a high clump of rocks, and as our friends turned their gaze that way in surprise they saw a man coming into view. He was a rather young man, and by his general appearance, must have been a prospector. There was something about his manner that indicated he was either worried or frightened, and as our hero quickly sized him up he came to the conclusion that though he was not exactly a stranger in those parts, he had not been there very long. The polish of a man not used to roughing it was not yet worn off, even though his clothing and boots were well worn.

"Hello, stranger!" called out Young Wild West,

as he brought his sorrel stallion to a halt and gazed at the young man curiously. "So there is a name to the canyon, eh?"

"Yes, there's a name to it, and a very fitting one, too," replied the stranger. "It is called Death Canyon."

"Death Canyon! Why, I've been to a place that was called that. But it was not in these parts, so, of course, this can't be the same one. A fitting name, you say? Tell us why, please?"

"Because death lurks in all parts of it, especially after you get near the other end. If it don't come from starvation, after you lose your way, it comes from other sources, and some of them are very mysterious, too. I would not attempt to go on through if ten thousand dollars were offered me, though it is the nearest cut to Rag Flat, the mining camp. That is where I am bound, but I know a way to get to the high ground, and that is the route I am going to take. I saw you folks coming, so I thought I would wait here and warn you."

"We are much obliged to you, my friend. It certainly is very kind of you to do that. You must be acquainted at Rag Flats, as you call it?"

"I am. I have been there three or four times. It is there that I have to go to get my supplies, you know. I am a prospector, and I mean to stick at it until I strike it rich, or my money is all gone. Others have struck it rich around here, and there is no reason why I shouldn't."

"I like your confidence," said Wild, with a laugh. "You deserve to succeed all right. But what is your name?"

"Harry Muller. Now, what is yours, if I may ask?"

"Young Wild West."

"I thought so when I saw you coming. I've heard the men at the camp speak of you quite often. I am glad to meet you, Young Wild West."

The prospector put out his hand and our hero shook it warmly, for he was now convinced that he was an honest young man, who meant nothing but what was right. Wild then introduced the rest of the party, and when this had been done he looked at Harry Muller curiously and said:

"So you waited here to advise us not to go on through Death Canyon, did you?"

"Yes; I was just turning this way for the path that leads up out of the canyon when I saw you coming. I thought it best to tell you."

"Well, we can't take your advice."

"What! You are not going on through, are you?"

The young man's face fell as he spoke. "Yes, that's just what we are going to do. You say that is the nearest way to get to Rag Flat, but it is not for that alone that we are going that way. From what you said, there is some sort of danger to be encountered, and that is what we are looking for—danger!"

"You are, eh?" and the prospector turned and looked at the girls. "You surely are not going through Death Canyon with the young ladies, I hope?"

"Oh! I reckon they are not afraid."

"But don't go!" cried the young man. "Something will happen to you if you do. Don't take the young ladies into such danger—don't, Young Wild West."

"See here, Harry Muller. Suppose you go with us? If the girls are not afraid, you should not be."

The prospector hesitated a moment, and then he retorted:

"If you really mean to go through Death Canyon I will go with you."

CHAPTER II.—Our Friends Camp at the Water-Hole.

Harry Muller was evidently not afraid to go through Death Canyon, even though he believed it to be an exceedingly dangerous place. No doubt he had heard enough about Young Wild West and his partners to convince him that they were of the sort who were bound to succeed, where others failed. But the very fact that they intended to go through, and take the girls with them, was quite enough to cause him to make up his mind to accompany them, since he had been asked to do so.

"That's the way to talk," said Young Wild West, in reply to the young man's declaration.

His horse and burro, which he used to carry his outfit, was standing near, and he was not long in getting them. Mounting, he joined the party and then rode on through the canyon. As they went past the spot our hero could see the path Muller had intended to follow before he saw them coming.

"It's a good thing to know where that is, boys," he remarked to his partners. "Some time we might need it, in case we want to get out of the canyon in a hurry."

"That's right, Wild," the scout said. "But I reckon we won't have to git out of here in a hurry, not very soon, anyhow. We're going right on through to Rag Flat, an' we don't care if there's forty outlaws an' a whole lot of mysterious men running around with skulls. No sich galoots as they are kin scare us."

The sun was now touching the jagged line of the mountains to the west. It would not be very long before darkness would come. When Muller declared that the water-hole was only two or three miles further on they all felt pretty easy, for though they had enough water to last them until the next day, it would be good for the horses to have all they could get. On through the rugged canyon they rode, and it was not long before they reached the water-hole. There was not a great deal of water in it as they found when they got there, but quite enough to answer their purpose. It was rather brackish in taste, but their horses were used to that, so there was no real inconvenience to be suffered in that way.

"You two Chinamen get a hustle on you and get the camp in shape," said Wild, as he dismounted.

"Allee light, Misler Wild," came from Hop and Wing, almost as if in one voice, and they were upon the ground in a jiffy. So many times had they loaded and unloaded the pack-horses and put up tents, and then taken them down, that they had it down fine, so to speak. They worked with a regular system, and when the prospector saw how rapidly they went ahead he was not a little

astonished. As soon as the tents had been erected and the horses tied, so they might not stray away, Wing went for the bundle of fagots they had brought along with them, and soon had a fire started. The coffee kettle was hung over the blaze, and while that was steaming away venison and bear-meat was preparing for broiling over the coals when the blaze died down.

"You seem to have a good supply of provisions with you," remarked Muller, as he looked over the outfit. "I was just about out, and that's why I was heading for Rag Flat."

"Well, we generally arrange it so that we have about what we want," answered Wild. "You see we always try to make our trips so that we are never more than three or four miles away from a town or mining camp. By doing that it is easy to keep supplies."

"Yes, that's so. But in my line, when in traveling all around in places I have never been before, all the while looking for gold, there are times when I don't strike civilization in weeks. This time I have been out for ten days, and it is very little I have found to pay me for the time. But I'll strike it rich yet, I feel certain of it."

"You don't think it worth while to stake a claim over at Rag Flat, then?" Wild queried.

"No. I made up my mind that I wouldn't do that until a last resort. As far as I have noticed, I don't think there are very many getting rich over there, though they all seem to make enough to keep things going. I'm looking for something better than there is to be found right around the mining camp."

"That's right. There's nothing like going after big game, Muller."

"But take my advice, an' don't spend all yer money afore yer go back to ther camp and stake out a claim," advised the scout. "A galoot don't stand much show in a mining camp if he ain't got no money to back him. Of course he kin go to work for somebody else, but a man with your education an' ideas don't want ter go to work for somebody else, I reckon."

"I don't unless I have to," and the prospector laughed good-naturedly. "I won't say that I wouldn't be willing to work for someone else, if I could do no better. But I still have a couple of hundred dollars left, and I'm going to stick it out until that's gone."

In a little while the supper was ready, and when the prospector sat down to it he declared it was the first real square meal he had had a chance at in over a week.

"I'm not much of a hunter," he said, "or I suppose I would fare better. I can't shoot a deer on the run to save my life; and it's very seldom a fellow can get one standing ready to be shot."

"You should practice in shooting a little bit," spoke up Arietta. "Anyone can learn to do it if they only try hard and keep at it."

"I can't agree with you on that, Miss Arietta," and the young man shook his head. "There are some people who could never learn to shoot straight, even if they kept at it every day for years. I am satisfied to that, for I'm one of that kind."

After the supper was over they all engaged in conversation. It was now fast getting dark, and as they had very little in the line of firewood, the

fire was allowed to go out. But a couple of lanterns were lighted, so they could all see each other quite plainly, and the near vicinity. It was just then that the clatter of hoofs sounded near at hand.

"Someone coming, I reckon!" exclaimed Charlie.

"That's right," answered our hero. "But as we don't know just who or what they are, I reckon we had better be prepared for anything that might happen. Girls, get behind the rocks."

"Maybe the outlaws are coming," suggested Muller, his face paling. "We should have gone on up the path and left the canyon."

"Take it easy," advised our hero, in his cool and easy way.

Though they left the lanterns right where they were, all hands took pains to get behind the rocks. The hoof-beats came nearer, and in less than a minute seven horsemen galloped straight up to the camp and came to a halt. As our friends peered at them from behind the rocks they saw that their faces were covered with masks. Something was going to happen, and they all knew it.

CHAPTER III.—The Masked Horsemen Get the Worst of It.

Young Wild West was just as cool as he ever was in his life when he peered from behind a rock and saw that the horsemen were masked.

"Hello!" called out one of the masked men, who was evidently the leader. "Are yer all asleep here?"

"I reckon not," answered the young deadshot, quickly. "What do you galoots want, anyhow?"

"Can't you guess?" came the query, with a short laugh. "Yer oughter be able ter tell by ther looks of us that we're after what money an' valuable you have got here. But there ain't no use in talkin' about it; jest step out an' shell out what you have got. We're ther outlaws of Death Canyon, an' we generally has our way about things. So long as yer don't put up a fight we'll let yer alone, but the minute any of yer goes ter firin' a shot down yer go, ther whole business of yer! I reckon you kin see us well enough ter know that we've got yer covered."

"That's all right. Now since you have had your say, I'll have mine. I'll give you galoots just sixty seconds to turn around and ride away from here. If you don't go in that time you never will go! You hear what I say! It is Young Wild West who is talking to you. Maybe you have heard of him, and maybe you have not. But I'll give you my word that when your horses go away from here, unless you start right away, they will be without riders."

"Thunder!" exclaimed one of the masked men, loud enough for our friends to hear him.

There was a short silence, and then the masked leader spoke again.

"Come, we don't want no foolin' about this. You know very well that we've got you dead ter rights, so step up an' be quick about it. We ain't ther sort of galoots what stands any foolin'."

The fact was the masked villains could not see any of our friends, for they had taken the precaution to get behind the rocks at our hero's

suggestion before the villains came in sight of them. It was evident that they had heard of Young Wild West before, or else one of them would not have made the exclamation they heard. But the man leading them seemed to be one of the persistent sort, and suddenly he fired a shot at what he thought was a human figure close to one of the rocks. The bullet went past our hero close enough for him to hear its hum, and then satisfied that there was nothing else to do, he took quick aim at him and pressed the trigger. Crack! As the report rang out the man threw up his arms and dropped from the saddle. Crack, crack! Charlie and Jim fired almost simultaneously and two more riders were unseated. But the rest must have been ready to flee at an instant's notice, for the echo of the first report had not died out when they were galloping away.

"I reckon they got a little more than they bargained for," said our hero, coolly, as he nodded to the prospector, who was crouching close to the ground, gripping a revolver tightly as though he expected he would have to put up a fight, even though he died for it.

It had all happened so quickly that it hardly seemed possible that the villains could have got away in such haste.

"Come, Charlie," said Wild, in a low tone of voice. "I reckon we'll see where they went to."

Without any loss of time, whatever, the two crept from behind the rocks and started in the direction the four survivors had taken. As they rounded a turn in the cliff they saw them gathered in a little patch of moonlight about a hundred yards from the spot. But just as they got near enough to open fire upon them, they heard one of the men exclaim:

"Come on, boys! There's only one thing for us to do, an' that is for us to go back an' report to ther captain. They've got too good a place for us to think of gettin' them out of there. There ain't no use in goin' back there, so come on."

Before Wild could stop him, the scout raised his revolver and fired a shot. But as the boy's hand touched his arm at that moment, the bullet merely grazed the top of one of the villain's hats. But that was quite enough to start them ahead, and away they went, riding for their lives.

"I reckon that will be about all, for the present, anyhow," observed our hero. "Come on back, Charlie. The chances are that there are more of them, and that they will probably come back here. But I reckon we can fix up things so that we will be able to hold our own."

Reluctantly the scout followed him back to the camp.

"Have they gone, Wild?" Arietta asked.

"Yes, they have gone to report to their captain," was the reply. "It seems that the one I shot was not the real leader. He must have come here with the others to see what he could do with us. But he never lived long enough to do anything that amounted to anything, I reckon. He started the game, and he got his medicine."

"Yes, and you must have shot another of them just now."

"Well, Charlie fired, but I didn't want him to

kill any of them while they were going away, so I just pushed up his arm enough to spoil his aim. We don't want to do that kind of fighting."

"But we heard ther galoots say they was goin' ter report to their captain," spoke up the scout. "That was plain enough that they meant ter git more men an' come back after us, I reckon. I thought we might as well settle ther hash of ther whole lot of 'em, an' have done with it. A white man what goes around with a mask on his face ain't no better than an Injun with his war paint on. There ain't no rubbin' that out, no matter how yer take it."

There was no use in arguing the question with Charlie, as every one knew. They let him have his own way about it. Harry Muller declared that he had seen more real excitement that evening than he had since the time he rode through the canyon.

"I wish we were safe in Rag Flat," he said. "We have got a good chance to get there, for all we have got to do is to go up the path a little back of here, and then we can fool the outlaws."

"Well, you can go if you want to," Wild answered. "I reckon we are going to see this thing out. I wouldn't turn back now, if I knew there were a hundred masked galoots waiting for us!"

"Oh! I won't leave you now. I am not that kind of a man. I don't want you to think I am a coward, Young Wild West."

"Well, don't try to make me change my mind, then, please. I don't like it."

"I won't say another word."

"Good! Now we will stay right here till mornin', and then we will go on through Death Canyon. We'll get to Rag Flat some time to-morrow, I reckon."

"If we don't it'll be ther first place we ever sot out ter go ter, an' didn't git there," chipped in the scout.

The prospector thought it queer that the girls did not side in with him when he spoke of going the other way; but when he found that he was the only one who had shown anything like fear he changed his manner and soon declared that he would help fight the way through to Rag Flat, and would show that he was not afraid, so long as he had Young Wild West to lead him. An extra good watch was kept that night, but the masked villains did not show themselves again, and when daylight came our friends were stirring.

The bodies lay where they had fallen, and Cheyenne Charlie went out and removed the masks. He called Muller to see if he could identify any, but he could not, he declaring that he did not remember of having seen them before. After breakfast they got ready and then started through Death Canyon, ready for anything that might turn up.

CHAPTER IV.—Wild Is Caught By the Outlaws.

When Young Wild West and his friends started to resume their journey through Death Canyon they had all made up their minds not to be surprised at anything that might happen. They had not gone more than a mile when they saw three men riding right toward them, leading a

pack mule behind them that was loaded with a prospecting outfit, as far as they could judge.

"You want to keep an eye on those villains," observed our hero, as he turned to his companions. "They look to be prospectors, but I have an idea that they are outlaws and that they are coming this way just for the purpose of giving burial to the bodies of those we shot last night."

"You kin bet your life they are, Wild," spoke up the scout. "But it won't take long for us to tell what kind of galoots they are. All's we want is to have a good look at 'em."

The three men came right along, not showing any great surprise at seeing our friends approaching them. Three or four minutes later they met and both parties came to a halt.

"Good mornin', strangers," said one of the trio, as he cast a swift glance over the party. "Which way are yer bound?"

"Through Death Canyon," answered our hero. "We want to get to Rag Flat, and I reckon that's the shortest way there."

"Yes, that's right. We jest come from there. We left yesterday afternoon, an' then we took a rest till daylight, an' started on ag'in. We're prospectors in ther canyon, you know."

"I see you are."

As Wild said this he had already come to the conclusion that the three men were villains. The very looks of them indicated this, especially as there was a sort of sneaky way about them, and they appeared to be rather uneasy under his gaze.

"Are you fellows going to Rag Flat to locate?" queried one, who acted as the spokesman.

"Oh, we never locate anywhere very long. We are simply riding about looking for adventure and excitement. I have heard it is dangerous to go through Death Canyon. How about that?"

"Well, we heard that, too, over in Rag Flat; but we came through all right, an' put in ther best part of ther night in ther canyon, an' we never seen anything that was any more dangerous than anywhere else around. Nothin' bothered us."

"Is that so? Well, then I reckon we'll go through all right. But, say?"

"Well, what is it?" asked one of the men.

"You said you were going prospecting, I believe?"

"Yes, that's right. We've got our outfit right with us."

"What are you going to dig for—gold?"

"Sartin."

"Oh, I thought maybe you were going to dig graves, or something of the kind."

At this the three men exchanged glances.

Though they were acting their parts pretty well, they could not help doing this, as the boy spoke in such a pointed way.

"Yes," went on Wild, in his cool and easy way. "I thought maybe you might have lost some of your friends—two or three of them might have got shot, you know—and that you were on your way to bury them."

"Oh, no!" was the quick reply, as the spokesman recovered himself and acted in a way that was half surprise and half decisive. "There ain't but three of us, an' that's enough ter travel

together, I reckon. We never had no one else with us, so we couldn't very well lose 'em."

"Well, I just spoke that way because you will find two or three bodies before you go very far. We had a little skirmish last night with a band of outlaws, and the result is that three of them lie back in the canyon. They tried pretty hard to get hold of us, but it was no go. But maybe you might take a notion to give them decent burial. We didn't bother with it, because we thought some one might come along that might want to do it more than we did."

"I reckon we don't want anything to do with any outlaws, whether they're dead or alive," declared the one who had not spoken before; "do we, boys?"

"I reckon not," was the reply.

"Well, I hope you have luck," and Wild started his horse ahead, just as though he did not care to have anything more to say to them.

They took the hint and rode on. Our friends continued on their way, keeping their horses at a jog. On they rode, winding this way and that, where the trail was the more even. There was so much sameness about the bare, rugged rocks on either side of them that there was no change, as far as scenery went. The distance only being about thirty-five miles, Wild knew that it would not be later than afternoon when they would arrive at Rag Flat, unless something happened to stop their progress through the canyon.

That something would happen, he felt sure, for he knew the masked band would certainly be looking for revenge upon them for what had happened the night before. But when ten miles had been covered, and nothing came to disturb them, it began to look as though they might have passed the place where the outlaws made their headquarters. However, they had no means of knowing just where this might be, so it would be in order for them to keep on the watch continually. When just about half the distance to the mining camp had been covered, they struck a part of the canyon that was more wild and rugged than anything they had seen before since entering it.

Queer-shaped rocks reared themselves on every hand, the steep cliffs showing on either side as a desolate background, and the clear, blue sky looming up overhead. Hundreds of hiding places that might be infested by outlaws or bandits could have been selected within a scope of half a mile. As they kept to a narrow defile, where the rocks ran up about ten feet from the ground on both sides, and where it would be necessary for them to proceed in single file to get there, Wild called a halt. It looked very much like a trap to him, especially as he knew they had enemies somewhere in the canyon.

"Boys," said he, whispering to his partners, "I reckon we have got to look out how we go through here."

"That's right, Wild," the scout answered. "Ain't there no other way to git through?"

"There might be around to the right," suggested Jim Dart.

Wild shook his head. Then he quickly dismounted, and leaving his horse with his partners, he started swiftly through the defile on foot. It was not a very long one, though it had several turns to it, and he soon came out into a wide

space at the other end. But the boy had scarcely got there when there was a whiz, and as he looked up from whence the sound came a rope settled about his body, and before he could throw it off it was drawn tight and he was lifted from the ground.

"Look out!" he cried. "They've got me!"

Wild's right arm was pinned to his side by the rope, but as he felt himself being drawn upward he managed to draw the gun from the holster at his left hip. But just as he was going to level it at the two men who were above him, who were swiftly hauling him upward, a hand reached down and knocked it from his grasp. Then the boy was almost helpless, even though he had the use of his left hand. If he could have been permitted a little time the chances are that he would have made a pretty stiff fight of it, but the distance was not great enough to permit that, and in less than ten seconds from the time the rope had tightened about his body he was seized by the villains. There were not only two of them, for as he was pulled over the edge of the rock several more appeared.

All were masked, but this made little difference to the boy, as it is hardly likely he would have recognized any of them as men he had seen before, anyhow.

"Just you shut up!" one of them exclaimed, as he pushed the muzzle of a revolver close to the forehead of the dashing young deadshot. "You have hollered jest about enough, I reckon. It may be that we kin git more of 'em, boys, but Young Wild West is ther one we wanted, above all others. We've heard enough about him to make us feel as though he would be a rich prize. Jest tie him up an' put a gag in his mouth, an' be quick about it."

Wild was not foolish enough to make any outcry, for he knew pretty well that he was in the hands of very desperate criminals. After a very short space of time, he was bound hand and foot and gagged with a piece of unraveled rope. Then his captors, eight in number, took him up and carried him along through a little hole that was at the top of the ridge of rocks. They headed toward the side of the canyon that was farthest from the spot where the capture had been made. It was very little noise they made, too, which showed that they did not want the boy's companion to know which way they went.

After they once bound him, Wild did not make any struggles whatever. So many times had he been placed in similar plights that he well knew how useless it would be to do so. As the villains reached the other side of the canyon they descended by way of a narrow path to an open spot that lay beneath a wide, overhanging ledge of gray rock. Their horses were here, tied to jutting points of rock, ready for them. The man who was evidently the captain of the band caused the boy to be placed on the horse with him. Wild was handled rather roughly and he was soon hanging over the pommel of the saddle as though he had been but a sack of grain. But he never once kicked or struggled, and the outlaw captain seemed to be pleased at this.

Had the boy acted in a contrary way, he would have given the villain no end of trouble. But that was not our hero's way of doing business. He knew he had been caught napping and now

he was simply trying to think of a way to outwit them and make his escape. He knew very well that Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart would find where he had been taken, no matter if it took them considerable time to do it. When the outlaws had all mounted they rode along through the canyon, taking care to keep behind a low ridge of rocks that ran along close to the right side of it.

Not until they were fully half a mile from the spot where the capture had been made did they put their horses at a gallop. Then they rode swiftly onward, heading this way and that, which showed how well they knew the ground they were traveling, and when a little over ten miles had been covered they made a sharp turn and entered a passage that ran back under the earth itself. In less than a minute they were in total darkness, and then Wild knew that he was being taken to the hiding place of the outlaws that infested Death Canyon.

CHAPTER V.—Following the Trail.

The girls and the prospector were perhaps twenty feet from the commencement of the defile with the Chinaman, but Charlie and Jim were standing right in it when they heard Young Wild West's warning cry. All hands knew right away that the boy had been trapped. The scout acted as though he was going to rush through, but Jim quickly caught him by the shoulder.

"Don't!" he whispered. "We'll stand a better chance if we keep still and watch and listen. They have not killed him, that we know, or he would not have been able to cry out. What we want to do now is to get around somewhere, so we can see what's going on."

"Right yer are, Jim," retorted Charlie, giving in to the boy at once.

The two at once started back to where the rest of the party was in waiting, and they were just in time to see Arietta starting to climb a pile of rocks. Something had told the brave girl that the danger that had overtaken her dashing young lover must have come from above, and, acting on an impulse, she started to go upward. Seeing that she was bent upon doing this, Jim Dart mounted his horse and quickly rode around to the right. Meanwhile Arietta went on upward, climbing with more ease than the average girl could have done.

But that was nothing for her. She had been born and reared in the wild West, and she was used to roughing it. Climbing rocks was but mere play to her. Up she went, and in less than two minutes she was at the top of the ridge. But the villains had done their work quickly and well, and they were just leaving the spot as she got within sight of them. The moment she saw them she felt that she had succeeded, and she knew that they were not going to get away with Wild without her knowing which way they went. She paused long enough to lean over the top of the rocks and motioned to those below, so they would know that she had made a discovery. Then she started along after the masked gang. She saw the helpless form of her dashing young lover, as he was being carried bodily along the ridge, and

once or twice she was tempted to open fire on the outlaws. But she knew very well that she could hardly hope to rescue him in that way. It was better to follow them and see where they went. Then she could come back and report, and plans could be made to effect the rescue of Wild. On went the brave girl, keeping as close to them as she dared, and it was not long before she saw them reach their horses that were in waiting under the overhanging ledge. Then it was that the girl was taken with the fear that they might be able to elude her. When she saw Wild placed upon the horse with the leader of the outlaws, she knew it would be very difficult for her to keep within sight of them very long. But there was nothing to do but to go ahead now.

If she turned back they would surely get away, and she would have no knowledge of where they went. When she found that they were keeping their horses at a walk she felt a little better. As they started to ride away the girl crept to the top of the rock and tossed her hat to the ground below. This would show Charlie and Jim, if they rode up that way, that she had gone that way and they might be able to find a means of getting to the top of the ridge with their horses. If they could not do this, they would have to go around and try it from the other side. Arietta took the trail and followed it with the caution of an Indian scout.

It was not hard to keep up with the walk of the horses, but when the outlaws started away at a gallop she was soon left behind. She was now in a quandary. But when she looked at the ground and saw that the fresh hoofprints showed plainly she was a little encouraged.

"I must go back and get the rest up here in some way with the horses," she thought. "Then we will follow the trail and Wild will surely be saved."

Looking around carefully, she was not long in finding a way to get down to the so-called level ground at the bottom of the canyon. But she was on the opposite passage to that from which she had ascended. After thinking a moment, she decided to go back the same way she had come, and then let her friends know the way to get to the trail with the horses. Back she went, and although the distance was over half a mile, she soon made it. When she saw them all waiting at nearly the same place she had left them at, the girl was delighted.

Running forward along the ridge, she reached a point from which she could attract their attention, and when she saw Jim Dart holding her hat which she had thrown down in his hand, she knew they had been baffled, and were no doubt sorely puzzled.

"Hello!" she called out, loud enough for them to hear her.

They all heard her, and the next minute Arietta was telling them just what to do. Then Cheyenne Charlie mounted his horse and led the way through the defile. Arietta ran along then at a little distance, and found she could look over and see them. She also knew that they might make a short cut to the trail she had been following, so she was not long in discovering a means to get down to them. Then she mounted her horse and took charge of Spitfire, keeping a tight hold upon the bridle-rein, so the sorrel

might not get frightened at being without a rider and try to run away

They all rode on, the two Chinamen bringing up the rear, as usual. Anna and Eloise had little or nothing to say—none of them did just then, it seemed. They were all wondering what had become of dashing Young Wild West. After what seemed a rather long time, they came to the trail that led along close to the side of the canyon. The hoofprints showed plainly, and when he saw them the scout gave a nod of satisfaction.

"If ther galoots think they kin fool us they're mighty much mistaken," he declared. "They think they have got Wild, an' that they kin hold him a prisoner, an' then force us ter give up a pile of money fur him, maybe. But jest wait! I'll git ter ther place they've gone ter, an' there won't be no mistake about it, either."

"Lat light, Misler Charlie; me go, too, so be," spoke up Hop, who was close enough to hear everything the scout said.

"All right, Hop. When I need your help, which most likely I will, I'll let yer know."

"And I will have something to say, too, when the time comes," Arietta put in.

"Sartin," Charlie answered. "Of course. I know that your judgment is always mighty good, Arietta."

They all knew this quite well. They also knew that when the girl made up her mind to pursue a certain course when Wild was missing, and probably in great danger, she would not listen to any one, but did as she thought best. They continued along the trail, riding as fast as the pack horses could go. In some places the hoofprints could not be seen, owing to the hard ground; but for the most part, there was enough sand to leave the impressions.

When they had covered a few miles and saw that the tracks were leading them right on through the canyon, they began to think that it must be that the outlaws were located somewhere close to the mining camp. It was getting well toward noon, and that meant that the outlaws must have carried Wild a long way.

"Is this ther regular trail that goes through ther canyon, Muller?" Charlie asked the prospector, when he began to grow uneasy over their delay in finding the boy.

"It is not the one that is used by regular travelers," was the reply. "I never knew there was such a smooth way along here. This trail is as new to me as it is to you."

"Well, that sorter accounts fur ther outlaws havin' their own way in Death Canyon, then. I s'pose they've got places here an' there where they git over to ther regular trail. This is their own trail. I reckon they must feel that they own it, in fact."

"Most likely they do," Jim Dart answered. "Men like them sometimes get the idea in their heads that they own the whole earth."

"They kin think that way if they want ter. If they only jest keep Wild a prisoner, an' don't take a notion ter do any harm ter him, that's all I ask. We'll have him away from 'em afore it gits dark, an' I'll bet on it!"

The prospector acted as though he hardly believed this, but he made no comment. It happened that the spot where the outlaws had en-

tered the passage with our helpless young hero was well surrounded by rocks. There were openings here and there which horses might go through and probably get to the trail that ran through the central part of the canyon, no doubt. But it was the sort of a place that would be apt to make a stranger there get "all mixed up," so to speak.

No matter which way one might look, there was a sameness to it all, save that the steep side of the canyon was the same all through. To make matters all the more puzzling, there was nothing but the hard rock to walk or ride upon, and this made it impossible for footprints, or even hoofmarks to show. It was at this point that our friends came to a halt. They all felt that they had about reached the end of the trail, for Muller declared that it was not more than seven miles to the mining camp that was situated at the mouth of the canyon.

"Well," said Cheyenne Charlie, as he dismounted, "I reckon somethin' has got ter be done now. I feel it in my bones that we're mighty close ter ther place them galoots took Wild. Don't nobody make any noise. Jim, s'pose me an' you go around on foot, if Arietta is willing."

"I am willing," the girl answered quickly. "Go on. If you fail to do anything, I will try."

"And if Missy Alietta no findee Misler Wild, len me takee lookkee 'lound," declared Hop.

The scout and Dart quickly dismounted, and then the rest followed suit.

"Come on, Jim," said Charlie. "I reckon we'll find out somethin' afore very long."

"I think so, Charlie," was the reply.

Without another word, the two set out to make a search among the rocks, keeping as close as they could to the steep inside of the canyon. Arietta watched them until they were lost to view, and then she nodded to Hop and said:

"I guess we'll start out, too, Hop. There is no use in waiting. I fear Wild is in great danger, and the quicker we find him the better it will be."

"Allee light, Missy Alietta," was the Chinaman's reply.

CHAPTER VI.—Wild Hears of the Mad Miner.

For perhaps about fifty yards Young Wild West was carried on through the darkness. The outlaws were all strangely silent now, and not until it began to grow a little light in the passage did any of them make a remark. Then the leader exclaimed:

"Here we are, boys, back in our good old retreat, safe an' sound. This is the place no one has been able to find yet, an' I reckon they never will be able to find, either. I s'pose Young Wild West's come here for ther purpose of runnin' us down. That's his game, so I've heard. Ha, ha, ha!"

"That's right, Captain Harvey," answered one of the villains. "I knowed him the minute I set eyes on him. If we had known it last night I reckon we wouldn't have tackled 'em when they was in camp. Young Wild West an' his pard's kin put up a fight that's about equal ter a whole regiment. There ain't no mistake about that."

Ther boy is ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, an' his pards kin shoot purty nigh as straight as he kin. We sartinly done a nice job when we laid that trap for him, though I didn't think we was hardly goin' ter git him."

"Well, Buddy, we did git him, anyhow. I was goin' ter kill him right away, but sich a galoot as he is ain't deservin' of no easy death. Ever since he's been big enough ter hold a gun out straight he's been botherin' sich men as we are. He's been mighty lucky, too, but all ropes has to come ter an end, you know. Young Wild West has reached ther end of his."

Then they all began to talk, and as Wild listened to their conversation he could easily tell how delighted they were at having made him a prisoner. Reaching the end of the passage, they entered a broad, roomy cave. It was of natural formation, of course, and the rocky earth was supported at regular intervals by huge boulders and stone, some of them looking to be almost as if they had been cut out by the hand of man.

A rift in the rock overhead admitted light enough for them to see all through the cavernous place, and off to the left was what might have been called a series of apartments, some of them being almost square in shape. Wild took in all this as he was carried along. Many times had he seen such places, but he was willing to admit just then that this seemed to be one of the caves that might be called puzzlers. It was a rugged network, so it seemed. The villains reached that portion of the underground place they used as a stall for the horses. Then they dismounted and the boy prisoner was allowed to drop to the rocky floor, if such it could be called. Having been so long in one position, with his head hanging down, this was a great relief to Wild. He rolled over and then assumed a sitting posture.

He watched every move the villains made, but not until they had taken care of their horses did the villains turn their attention to him. Then the man who had been called Buddy took him by the arms and lifted him to his feet, at the same time severing the bonds that bound his ankles together.

"I reckon yer kin walk, you young galoot!" he exclaimed savagely. "It ain't likely that you will have to do much more walkin', but there ain't no use in makin' us carry yer the little ways you have got to go now. When you come in here it was ther last sight of the outside world you will ever git. Jest think about that; maybe it'll make you feel good."

"Fetch him on in here, Buddy," called out the captain, as he removed his mask and placed it in his pocket. As soon as we have had the chance to git a drink an' light up our pipes we'll give him ther opportunity to talk a little. I'd jest like ter know what he has got ter say, for I know he's got a mighty good opinion of us. He ain't never been ketched by sich a clever crowd as we are, I reckon."

There was a laugh at this remark, for no doubt it sounded rather humorous to the seven villains. Wild acted as though he was not paying a particle of attention to what they said, but really he was doing some pretty hard thinking just then. Though his limbs were stiffened from having been tied so tightly, he managed to walk, and he

did so willingly. Around an angle of rock he was conducted and a few feet farther brought him to the main part of the cave, which was occupied as a living quarters by the outlaws. That they must have been there for some little time was evident, as the place was fitted up with all the comforts that might be found in the shanty of a mining camp. There were even pictures on the walls, most of them being rough prints and lithographs.

Oil lamps hung from the rugged ceiling of rock, and across one end of the apartment was a long table which was already set with tin plates and cups, showing that the cook had arranged everything in that line before leaving the cave that morning. At one end of the apartment there was a sort of natural fireplace and a heap of ashes lay near it. As Wild looked at this he could easily guess that the draught carried the smoke up a sort of chute. On the side opposite to the table was a row of bunks. A few chairs, such as are to be found in a tavern or shanty saloon, were lined up on either side of the table, while a long bench close to the only fireplace was in evidence. Wild was conducted to one of the chairs, and as he sat down Captain Harvey, as the leader had been called by one of his men, faced him and said:

"Now then, Young Wild West, I reckon I'll give yer a chance ter talk. But afore I do I'll have a little drink. Bill, jest fetch out one of them jugs."

"All right, Cap," answered the man addressed, and then the captain cut the thong which held the gag in the boy's mouth.

Wild could not help breathing a sigh of relief, for it had nearly choked him.

"I reckon I feel a little better," he observed coolly. "Now, then, if you will just cut my hands loose I wouldn't mind it so much."

"Oh, you needn't think we're afraid ter cut your hands loose, Young Wild West," was the retort. "But I ain't goin' ter do that jest now. What do you think of our headquarters, anyhow?"

"Well, it couldn't be a much better place for such headquarters as you to occupy," and the boy looked over the room in a critical way.

"Yer think so, eh? Well, that shows you're a purty good jedge. But you don't seem ter sorter realize that you ain't never goin' ter git out of here alive."

"Oh, that's all right. I'm not worrying about that. I've been in places of this kind before. I've had lots of dealings with such galoots as you are. You can't scare me, so you can go ahead and say anything you like. You got the best of me, all right; but my turn will come pretty soon. I'm not worrying in the least."

"You're a mighty good sort of a galoot, I reckon," and the captain looked at him in a way that told that he was not a little surprised. "I never met yer afore, but there's some of my men as has seen yer, and they've told me a whole lot about yer. If they hadn't told yer was sich a wonderful shot, an' was sich a mighty cool hand, I wouldn't have took ther trouble ter fetch yer all ther way here. Instead of roping you, I would have shot yer dead. But I'm somethin' like an Injun, I always admire an enemy what don't show fear. It'll do me all ther more good

ter kill yer when ther time comes. Of course you know it wouldn't be safe for us to let you git out of here, no matter what kind of a promise we got from you. You ain't got money enough, nor none of your friends ain't, to buy your freedom. You have got to die, an' that's all there is ter it."

"I know I have got to die," the young dead-shot answered calmly, as he looked the villain squarely in the eyes. "That is something I am certain of. But when it comes to dying very soon, I don't believe I will. What you say does not amount to anything. You dare not kill me, and you know it. If you were to do it you would be hunted until you were caught, and then you know what you would get. There would be enough men after you to clean up your band in short order, and Death Canyon would be filled with them, in spite of the mysterious happenings that have been reported here. Don't think you are fooling with just an ordinary boy, for you are not. I am too well known, and have the backing of the United States Government, too. No! I am not a bit afraid of being killed by you."

The boy's words had more than ordinary effect on the captain and his men. Some of the villains looked at each other and shrugged their shoulders, just as though they did not know just what to take from it. Wild was quick to notice this.

"I want you to know that I did not come here for the purpose of interfering with any gang of outlaws, for I did not know there was any here," he went on. "I just happened along here with my friends, and meeting a prospector who told us it was dangerous to come this way, we decided to come, anyway. We are always looking for excitement and adventure, and that is the reason. He told us there was some sort of mysterious man here, who was known to run around among the rocks with a human skull, supposed to be that of his latest victim, in his hands. But if you are going to keep me here a prisoner, I suppose I will be delayed a few hours in seeing him."

There was a short silence after our hero ceased speaking. The outlaws exchanged glances and showed signs of uneasiness, too.

"Ther feller didn't tell yer that ther galoot what goes around with ther skull is called ther Mad Miner, then?" said Captain Harvey, after a while.

"No; he didn't say that. He didn't know, I reckon."

"Well, we know, don't we, boys?"

"Yes!" came the quick reply from three or four of them, while the rest nodded.

"An' he won't raise ructions around through Death Canyon very long, not if we once git hold of him! He's proved that he can't be dropped by a bullet; but maybe if we got hold of him once we'd soon fix him. He's done enough damage to our business; we've lost since he's scared folks from comin' through this way. Why, ther stage-coach don't go through no more. They've give up ther route entirely; an' now ther people in Rag Flat has ter git their supplies up from Prescott, with a three days' drive of it. No, sir-ree! Ther Mad Miner ain't no good ter us."

Wild took this in with no little interest. He

was looking for information, and he certainly was getting it.

"So the Mad Miner can't be shot, eh?" he asked, after waiting a few seconds, and acting as though he never thought he was in the least bit of danger.

"It sorter seems that way," Captain Harvey answered. "But see here, Young Wild West! I reckon you ain't no visitor here; you was brought here ter be put out of ther way, after I'd settled on ther way ter do it."

"Oh, that's so! But didn't I just tell you that you dared not put me out of the way? You know that as well as I do. You made a big mistake in bringing me here. If you had shot me down when you had the chance you might have stood a chance of getting away. But now it is different."

"I can't see how it is any different," retorted the outlaw leader. "What makes ther difference?"

"Well, I don't know as I will tell you that. You should know that much."

"Well, what makes ther difference?"

"Don't you suppose my friends have gone for help?"

"Well, wouldn't they have done that if we'd shot yer?"

"No; for if you had shot me it is most likely you would have shot the rest of them, though you might have spared the girls. They would not know what to do, so there would really have been no one to hunt you down."

This stumped the captain.

"Blamed if there ain't somethin' in that!" he exclaimed. "But never mind that! You've got ter die, anyhow. I don't care if ther whole army gits after me. I've heard so much about you, Young Wild West, that I've jest made up my mind that you're too dangerous a customer ter live. I wouldn't let yer go, not fur ther promise of a million dollars!"

"All right. You can do as you please about it. But just remember that you can't frighten me. I am not that sort of a fellow."

Wild was bluffing hard, and he knew he had made good headway in the game, which was really one for life or death. It was now near the hour of noon. The outlaws set about to getting something ready to eat. Wild sat on the chair watching them, his hands still tied securely behind him. He watched what they were doing, never once showing the least sign of fear. No matter what his thoughts were, he did not mean to let them know them. An hour passed. The outlaws ate their noonday meal and then lighted their pipes to take it easy. Captain Harvey walked over to the boy captive, as though he meant to have another talk with him, but just then a fiendish scream rang out from some part of the big cave. The faces of the villains paled, and then Wild knew that the Mad Miner was close at hand.

CHAPTER VII.—Queer and Startling Happenings.

We will follow Arietta and Hop, who headed straight for the side of the cliff when they left the rest with the horses. It was the same direc-

tion that Charlie and Jim had taken, but Arietta had an idea that it was going to be quite a task to find the hiding place of the outlaws, and she figured that the more there were searching the quicker it would be done. Hop kept right along close behind her, leaving it to her to lead the way. For over ten minutes they searched about among the rocks, following every little passage that showed itself, only to eventually find themselves back where they had started from. But at length Hop clambered upon a rock, when he found the passage they had been following came to an abrupt end, and once up there he got sight of something that made his eyes open wide. It was nothing more than the open space that ran to the passage the outlaws had gone through with their prisoner something like half an hour before. He quickly turned, and leaning over the rock, whispered:

"Me findee allee light, Missee Alietta. You comee light up here, so be. Me showee you."

The girl's heart gave a bound. It was no difficult task for her to climb upon the rock, and the moment she got there she knew that the Chinaman had spoken the truth. Not only did she see the mouth of the passage, but she could also see the prints of horses' hoofs.

"Come on down," she said, in a very low tone of voice. "It won't be very long before we find Wild now, Hop."

"Lat whatee me tlinkee, so be," replied the clever Chinaman, as he slid down to the level below.

Arietta was there almost as quickly as he was, and then cautioning her companion to be very careful and not to make any noise, she started boldly for the passage. They proceeded through it until it got so dark that they could not see where to go, or which way it led. Then they came to a pause. Both listened intently, but could hear nothing that would indicate that there was anything in the line of human beings in the underground place. Then Hop struck a match. The flame lighted the passage for a short distance, but seeing that it went out, and that there were no obstacles in the way, the Chinaman started boldly forward.

He kept right on going, with Arietta close at his heels, until the match went out. He had plenty of them with him, so he quickly struck another. In this way they kept on until they saw the faint light on ahead. Then they again paused. Confident that they had struck the right place, Arietta tried to think of something to do. She had brought her rifle with her and carried the regular weapons that were always upon her when traveling, so she felt that in case they got in a tight place she would be able to put up a pretty good defense.

But if it happened that the outlaws were expecting any one to come there and search for Wild that would be another thing. Then it might be that they would fall into a trap. Arietta was not a little worried, but Hop appeared to be very calm. The fact was that the Chinaman figured that even if he did get into the hands of the villains he would be able to find a way to get the best of them through his ability to perform feats of magic. As we have already stated, there were

many passages and natural chambers in the back cavern that were formed of rock.

This made it almost impossible for the two to strike the particular place where the outlaws made their headquarters at the first time. After waiting a few minutes, and not hearing anything, they started on through the passage. But it just happened that they took a direction that was almost contrary to the one they should have gone, and after walking perhaps a full hundred yards they suddenly came to an outlet. It was on a narrow ledge projected out for several feet, as nothing could be seen of those they had left the other side of the rocks. The possibility was that they might be right under them, for they both knew that they had walked up quite an ascent since they entered the passage.

"We no findee here, Missee Alietta," said Hop, in a whisper. "We go lookkee somewhere else, so be."

"That's right," the girl replied, shaking her head. "The cave inside there is a regular honeycomb of passages, and it is hard to tell which way to go."

"We keepee on tly; len maybe pletty soonee we hear somebody talkee, and len we be allee light."

"That's right, Hop. Be very careful, and don't make any noise."

After looking up and down the canyon, and not seeing a sign of a human being, the two re-entered the passage and made their way downward again. Though there was light enough admitted through a big rift overhead, they could not find the passage they had come through on entering the cave, though they looked for it fully twenty minutes. But there were several passages that branched from them, mostly to the right, and choosing one of these the brave girl told the Chinaman to come on. They had not gone very far before they found that they were again ascending a rise. But the passage seemed to be a rather broad one, and it struck Arietta that it might possibly lead them to the spot they were so anxious to find. Up they went, winding this way and that.

They were really nearing the top of the back cave and they could now see where the light came in. A wide crack stretched across the natural rift in a zig-zag form, and through this the sun was shining brightly, lighting up the place and really making it look more lonesome than it might otherwise have appeared, for the curiously formed rocks stood out in bold relief. But it was little attention that they paid to what they saw. Pushing on they soon came to a crevice that opened right up at their feet. As they looked down into this they found that it ran at an angle of about forty-five degrees and seemed to be smooth and slippery. Hop dropped upon his hands, so he might get a good look below him. It was just then that a weird, fiendish shriek echoed through the underground place. The Chinaman was so startled that he involuntarily made a move to rise in a hurry.

But in doing this his hand slipped and then over he went, shooting down through the crevice like a shot. Arietta was dumfounded. She heard one gasping, choking cry, followed by a rattling of loosened stone and dirt, and then all was still. The awful shriek had frightened her not a little.

and then to have Hop fall down into the opening in that way was quite enough to fill the girl with fear and alarm. As she sat there, undecided what to do and trying hard to collect her senses, a footfall sounded behind her. Turning quickly, she beheld Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart approaching.

Like Arietta and Hop, the two had got lost in the mazes of the big cavern. Neither of them acted surprised when they saw the girl standing there alone. They had both heard the unearthly shriek, and as they had no knowledge that would give them a clue to the person who had uttered it, they were not a little disturbed. The pale face of Arietta, as it was turned toward them, made them feel more uneasy than ever.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "I am so glad you have come. Hop just slipped and tumbled down there."

When Charlie and Jim saw her pointing to the crevices they then knew that she had something more than the cry to be alarmed about.

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed the scout. "Ther heathen fell down there, did he? Well, that's mighty bad, I reckon. Did yer hear that awful yell, Arietta?"

"Yes; that is what made Hop slip and fall. He was leaning over, trying to look down, just as the cry rang through the cavern. When he tried to get up quickly his hand must have slipped, and then down he went. All I heard from him was a choking cry. I fear he has been killed."

"Maybe not. Hop is a mighty lucky heathen. He's got more lives than a cat. Don't think that, Arietta. But, by ginger! Things is gittin' worse, instead of better. I reckon Muller told ther truth when he said there was mysterious things happenin' Death Canyon. That yell sounded like ther wail of a lost soul, or somethin' like that. I'd almost bet it wasn't no human what made it."

"I reckon it came from the lips of a human being all right," spoke up Jim Dart, who had about recovered himself by this time. "We mustn't be surprised at anything we see or hear here. We have got too much on hand to let such things interfere with us for that."

"Sartin!" and the scout brightened up right away. "We've got ter save Wild, an' we've got ter find Hop. Come on! We'll git at it right away."

Charlie had brought a long lariat with him, for he never neglected to go well provided when he set out on such an errand as had brought him to the cave. There was no telling just when a rope might come in handy. They all knew that they must attend to Hop first, for he might be wedged in somewhere below, bruised and dying, or perhaps dead.

"We must not cry out," said Jim, "so you can lower me down, Charlie."

"Right yer are, Jim," was the reply, while Arietta gave a nod of assent.

Though all three expected to hear that awful shriek ring out again at any moment it did not come. Dart quickly tied the rope under his arms, and then he slipped over the edge of the opening, Charlie lowering him down carefully. There was a draught drawing downward, and as he went on down dust blew upon him and almost choked and blinded him.

"No wonder Hop did not cry out much," he thought. "This is quite enough to make a fellow keep his mouth closed."

Down he went, and when about a distance of sixty feet had been descended the bottom of the natural shaft was reached. The dust was still flying around him as the draught pulled it through, but Jim gave a pull on the rope, which meant that everything was all right, so far, and then waited until he could get a chance to see where he was. In less than a minute the dust was cleared away and then the boy looked around him and found a level piece of rocky floor. An opening before him showed that he had simply come down to a place they had passed through on entering the cave.

"Well," he muttered, "I reckon Hop did not get hurt much in coming down here. He is worth a dozen dead Chinamen yet, and the chances are that he will do something to distinguish himself before very long. If he happens to run across the galoot who let out that yell, and sees him first, there will be something happening, and I'll bet on it!"

Jim coolly gave the signal to be drawn up. It was two sharp pulls on the rope, and understanding it at once, the scout got to work. Jim had to keep his eyes and mouth closed, the same as he had done in going down. The dust was very thick in the chute. No doubt it had been accumulating there for years. When the boy was pulled over the edge of the opening he breathed a sigh of relief.

"Did yer find him, Jim?" asked Charlie, in a whisper.

"No," was the reply. "But I soon got satisfied that he never got hurt any. He must have gone on to look for Wild. That chute leads right down to a place that looks like the one we were in after we found the way through the passage from the outside. I believe it is, too, for we have done considerable climbing, and we must certainly have been going about in a circle."

"I am very glad Hop did not hurt himself," Arietta spoke up. "The fact that he was not there when you got down is proof that he must be all right."

"That's right, Arietta," nodded Dart. "Now we will continue the search for Wild."

The boy drew forth the pocket compass he always carried, and then he selected the direction they must keep to, according to his way of thinking.

"Horses could not get up here, so it is not likely that the outlaws are as high as this, either," he declared. "Come on! We will strike something shortly, I feel sure."

Hoping for the best, the three retraced their steps. Arietta had come by the shortest route, so she was able to help out Jim and the scout not a little. In a very few minutes they were back to the entrance of the dark passage that led out into the canyon. As they paused there, undecided just what to do next, a heavy report rang out. Then a shriek of terror sounded, and our three friends knew that the same person who had uttered the weird shriek was responsible for it.

CHAPTER VIII.—What Happened to Hop.

As the weird shriek resounded through the cavernous place Young Wild West remained perfectly still and watched the faces of the villains. He could see that they were a superstitious lot, and that they were mortally afraid of the person who had uttered it. The fact that the captain of the outlaws had told him about the Mad Miner made it quite plain to the boy, and he was not the least bit disturbed at what he had heard.

"What's the matter with you galoots?" he asked coolly, after waiting for a few seconds and not hearing any further sounds. "I thought you were so anxious to get hold of the Mad Miner. Why don't you go and get him? I take it that it was he who let out that yell just then."

"That was him, sure enough," retorted Captain Harvey. "It's all right for you to set there and ask us why we don't go an' git him, Young Wild West. But I reckon if you knowed as much about him as we do you wouldn't feel very anxious about goin' ter git him, after hearing that yell of his. That galoot ain't human, an' that's all there is to it."

"Oh, I guess he's human, all right," the boy answered in his cool and easy way. "Why don't you own up to it and say that you are afraid of him? You have already said that bullets don't have any effect on him. Why don't you go and catch him? If he's such a terrible fiend as I have heard he should not be running around loose. According to what I have heard said, his victims have been many, and that he uses the skull of every fresh one he gets to wave over his head and frighten those he comes across. I'll bet all I'm worth that I'll find out who and what he is before I quit this part of the country."

"You won't find out anything, Young Wild West," was the quick retort. "You ain't never goin' ter git out of here, so that settles it. I ain't goin' ter kill you jest now, 'cause I wanter wait till ther Mad Miner gits away from here. He don't generally stay around here very long. He jest comes around here now and then ter scare us, I reckon."

"Well, if he does come for that, I'm quite certain that he succeeds, all right. Why, some of you galoots are trembling in your boots even now. You're even afraid of the man's voice."

The outlaws acted as though they were ashamed of themselves as they heard this from the boy, who was taking the whole thing so coolly, though a prisoner, and helpless, at that. Our hero was now pretty well satisfied that there was little danger of his being harmed, much less killed. If it so happened that his friends could not find where he was he might suffer death; but that would be only when the captain of the band could pluck up enough courage to do it.

"Why don't some of you go and look for the Mad Miner?" he asked, when he found that none of the men were making a move to leave the spot. "Go and catch him and bring him here; I'd like to see what he looks like."

This was quite enough to make a couple of them muster up sufficient courage to leave the headquarters.

"We'll go out and see where he is, all right,"

one of them said, as he drew a revolver and moved away toward the main passage that led through the underground place.

"Don't try to use your revolver," advised Wild. "The captain says that bullets don't have any effect on the galoot. Take a rope. I think that will be better."

The sarcastic way in which the prisoner spoke nettled the villains considerably. The fact was that they were beginning to think that he was one of the sort who do not know what fear is, and, as the reader knows, they were pretty nearly right. But when he did fear within his breast Wild was not the one to show it. The two men came back and took seats at the table. Our hero laughed.

"Maybe the Mad Miner will come in, so I can get a look at him, since you fellows won't go out and hunt him up," he observed.

"He won't come in here," answered the captain quickly. "He knows better than that."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when a light footfall sounded close at hand. Instantly all eyes were turned in the direction it came from. Then it was that the faces of the villains turned paler than ever, for right before them stood the very person they had been talking about. A tall man with a bearded face and staring eyes was standing there, looking at them in a way that might have been called fierce, though as Wild took a good look at him, he decided that the man really was looking at nothing in particular; that, in fact, his mind was so far unbalanced that he really knew not what he was doing.

His attire was about like that of the ordinary miner or prospector. Remaining silent for the space of probably half a minute, the Mad Miner, as we must call him, drew from behind his back, where his hand had been resting, a human skull. As the gruesome thing was held before the eyes of the outlaws they involuntarily drew back against the long table, leaving Wild sitting alone within twenty feet of the uncanny visitor. Though his hands were tied behind him, the boy had the use of his feet. A sudden resolve came into his mind.

"I'll take my chances with the Mad Miner," he thought. "If I can manage to look him in the eyes for a second or two, I think I will be able to make him cut my hands loose. Then I will show these galoots how quickly I'll get out of here."

Wild turned his gaze squarely upon that of the Mad Miner, and in a very few seconds he found him looking straight at him. Then it was that he arose and walked straight to him. The mad man never moved a step, nor did he lower the hand that held the skull.

"Cut me loose," said Wild, in a low but commanding voice. "Do as I say!"

The man gave a start, and then the expression of his eyes softened as if by magic. Without a moment's delay his left hand slipped to his belt and drew forth a knife. Wild stepped closer, and then the rope that held his wrists together was severed.

"Much obliged to you!" he exclaimed, and then waving his hand defiantly at the villains he darted from the place.

So well had he watched when he was brought to the hidden headquarters that he knew just the

way to go, and before the astonished villains scarcely realized it he was heading for the dark passage. Reaching it, he kept right on running, though he slackened his pace somewhat, for fear of running into some obstacle. On went Wild, and the next minute he was outside in the canyon. It was easy for him to tell the way they had come, so he lost no time in taking direction that he hoped would lead him to within sight of his companions, for he knew they must certainly be somewhere in the vicinity by this time. As he got out upon a comparatively level spot that lay between the high piles of rock a heavy report sounded from within the cavernous place. The boy stopped instantly. He knew very well it was no rifle or revolver that had made the report. It sounded more like one of the big firecrackers that Hop Wah always carried with him. It was only natural that he should think right away that the Chinaman had found his way into the cave, and that he had got into some trouble and was compelled to explode one of the crackers in order to save himself.

"By jingo!" he exclaimed. "Can it be that Hop is in there? If that's the case the rest must be around here somewhere."

He quickly started to climb a rocky elevation, so that he might look around him. Before he reached the top of it he gave an exclamation of delight, for less than fifty yards from him he saw Anna, Eloise, the prospector, and Wing standing in a group near the horses. He raised a little higher and waved his hat, and the result was that he was seen by them. Then he motioned for them to keep silent and quickly started for them. Over the rocks he went with the agility of a mountain goat, and in a couple of minutes he had reached them.

"I'm so glad to see you, I don't know what to say!" exclaimed Harry Muller. "Charlie and Jim and Arietta and Hop went to look for you. Didn't you see anything of them?"

"No," answered our hero. "But I reckon I just heard something of Hop. I'll bet he set off a firecracker in that cave back there, for I can tell by the sound."

"Then he must be in trouble!" cried Anna, her face paling. "Arietta went with him, too."

"Well, I got away from the outlaws, but I'll go right back there," declared the dashing young deadshot, as he went over to one of the pack-horses and quickly possessed himself of a pair of revolvers that were carried among the supplies.

Though the outlaws had taken his weapons from him, they had not bothered with his cartridges. He quickly loaded the two weapons, and then possessing himself of a hunting knife, he turned to those who had been waiting there, and said:

"Stay right here where you are till I come back. Don't get frightened if you see a crazy man running around with a human skull in his hand. He is called the Mad Miner, so I learned from the outlaws. They are mortally afraid of him, and so are lots of people, from what I can hear. Take it easy, Muller, and don't go to shooting at the Mad Miner if you should happen to see him. But if you should happen to see any of the outlaws just take mighty good aim and let them have it. I

hardly think they will come out just now, though."

Without saying anything further, Will started back for the cave. He knew the way so well now that it did not take him long to reach it, though he had to do considerable climbing over the rocks to get there. Without bothering to light a match, he pushed on through the passage and soon came to where the light of day showed at the other end. He was not much surprised when he heard the voice of Hop raised in protest. Stealthily Wild made his way along, and soon he was right near the rocky chamber he had escaped from. A single glance told him that the Mad Miner had taken his departure. The voice of Hop could no longer be heard, but the outlaws were talking in very low tones. There sat Hop upon the table, the outlaws gathered about him, each holding a revolver in his hand. The clever Chinaman was doing his best to take it coolly. As our hero watched him, Hop calmly took a cigar from his pocket, and then he brought forth a match safe and struck one of the contents. As he lighted the cigar the villains standing before him gradually lowered their revolvers. Our hero smiled in spite of himself.

"I reckon that heathen is certainly a cool one," he thought. "The galoots are certainly meeting with people who don't show fear, anyhow. Well, that's the way to handle such villains."

As Hop got the cigar going to his satisfaction he smiled at the rough-looking men before him, and then said:

"Well, whatee you do about it? Me comee long and see um man holdee uppee um skull and lookee velly muchee likee mad; me touchee off um firecracker, and me makee him lun allee samee velly muchee fastee. Len you comee and catchee me. Me velly goodee Chinee, so be."

"You may be a very good Chinee," answered Captain Harvey; "but I happen to know that yer belong ter Young Wild West's gang. We had Young Wild West here a little while ago, and if that galoot of a Mad Miner had not come along and interfered, I reckon we would have him here yet. But we'll git him ag'in, an' I reckon we'll keep you here, too."

It was just then that Wild became conscious that there was some one near him. Turning slowly, and moving the hand that held the revolver around at the same time, he saw no less a person than Cheyenne Charlie creeping toward him. The boy felt relieved when he saw the scout, and as he gave a nod of recognition, was surprised to see two more forms come creeping close behind him. They were Arietta and Jim Dart. This was quite enough to make the boy feel in a very happy frame of mind. The only one of the party who was in real peril just now was Hop, and, after all, it could hardly be said that it was real danger, for there was no doubt in the mind of our hero but that he would find a means of escaping from the villains without any assistance. Arietta crept up to the side of her dashing young lover, and she soon had the satisfaction of having her hand squeezed.

"Do you know the way out?" the boy asked.

"Oh, yes," was the reply.

"Then you go on out. Charlie and Jim will wait

here with me until we get Hop free from the ga-loots," said the boy.

Arietta started boldly for the passage, for she surely knew the way. The girl had scarcely disappeared from view when Hop did something that treated the villains to another surprise. Just how he managed to do it, even our friends could not see, and they were watching closely. In some way he managed to light the fuse of one of the big, homemade firecrackers he carried and let it fall under the table. Bang! As the explosion ran out the clever Chinaman leaped right over the heads of the astonished outlaws and made a bolt for the passage. He almost fell over Wild and his partners, for they had not time to get out of the way. As they quickly got upon their feet, the voice of Arietta rang out in a wild cry for help, and then it was that the weird, unearthly shriek of the mad miner echoed through the underground place again.

CHAPTER IX.—A Baffling Search.

Hop had been nearly choked by the dust when he went headlong down the natural chute, but, as Jim Dart had said, he was not hurt. It was merely a shaking up that he received, so he was not long in scrambling to his feet and recovering from his surprise.

"Me allee samee comee down pletty quickee," he muttered, under his breath. "But whattee makee lat velly bad noisee? Soundee allee samee likee um ghostee, so be."

He knew it would not be advisable to call out to Arietta, as that would simply be the means of letting the enemy know there was some one there who did not belong there. Hop started to find a way to get back to the girl, but he became a little confused somehow, and the result was that he came to the big chamber that was occupied by the outlaws. If he had come there about a minute sooner, he would have seen Wild making his escape. As it was, he heard the sounds of the boy's footsteps, but he had no idea who was fleeing from the spot.

Hop did not see the villains inside the rocky chamber, but he did see the Mad Miner, who had not moved a foot from the spot he had been standing upon when he cut our hero's bonds. The clever Chinaman looked the man over as well as he could, for he could not see his face. When he saw that he was holding a skull over his head in such a peculiar way it occurred to him that it would be a good idea to give him a surprise. Hop had heard the prospector tell about the mysterious man, who went about carrying the skulls of his victims, and he promptly set the fellow down as being the identical man. But there was nothing so very mysterious about him, as far as Hop could see, and he even grinned when he thought what he was going to do.

"Um velly muchee mystelious man, so be," he thought. "He makee scare; maybe he gottee gold minee 'lound here somewhere and he cally um skull alound, so he allee samee scare um people 'way. Me velly soonee make him jumpee."

The Chinaman was now quite cool. He was in

no particular hurry, either, so he went carefully at what he proposed to do. First he took from one of the many pockets of his loose-fitting coat a clumsy-looking object that was probably five or six inches in length. This was nothing more or less than a firecracker, and a powerful one at that. Hop claimed to have worked in a factory where fireworks were made before leaving China, and whether he did or not, he certainly knew something about their manufacture. Next he brought out a match, which was one of the kind that can be struck without making a sound. The Chinaman was less than a dozen feet from the Mad Miner when he was ready to give him the surprise. He coolly struck the match and then he applied the flame to the fuse.

This done he rolled the cracker along the ground toward the unsuspecting madman, who was holding the outlaws at bay. The cracker stopped within a few inches of the man's heels. Then there was a quick sputter, and then—Bang! The report was a heavy one, and the Mad Miner jumped easily two feet from the ground. He uttered something that sounded like the snarl of a wild beast, and then he leaped forward like a shot and ran into one of the many passages that were close at hand.

"Hip hi!" exclaimed Hop, aloud, and then he broke into a laugh. "Me allee samee makee um mystelious man lun likee um deer, so be! Me velly smartee Chinee!"

Hop did not know the outlaws were there, or he would never have spoken out loud. The result was that before the smoke from the cracker had cleared away three or four of them were there. When he found himself struggling in their grasp Hop did not feel like laughing so much.

"Whatee mattee?" he cried, in a frightened way. "Hip hi! Mislter Wild! Comee——"

But his cry was cut short by a heavy hand being thrust over his mouth, and then he was dragged into the quarters of the outlaws. But the outlaws evidently did not think it worth while to tie him, so he boldly took a seat upon the table. Thus it was that Young Wild West saw him a few minutes later. What happened then has already been described. When the clever Chinaman set off the second cracker he made up his mind to get out of the place, and this he did. But he tumbled in a heap over Wild and his two partners, and then it was that Arietta's scream and the cry of the Mad Miner rang out. Wild quickly seized the Chinaman and lifted him to his feet.

"Come on!" he said in a low tone of voice. "We have got something to do now. Arietta has been caught by a madman."

"Alee light, Mislter Wild. Me——"

But the boy did not wait to hear what reply he would make. He started on a run through the passage after Charlie and Jim, who had already started. Something told our hero that the outlaws would not come out just then, since they feared the Mad Miner so; that they would wait until they were sure he was well away from the place. Just then the voice of Arietta was heard again.

"Wild! Wild!" she screamed. "Save me! I am in the power of a fiend!"

The voice came from somewhere above them, and our friends knew not which way to get to

her. But they knew it was not safe for them to remain where they were, so they went on out through the dark passage. It was there that the girl must have been caught by the madman, and as he had not come that way, they might find the way he went. Nothing more was heard, and when they reached the mouth of the passage they ran out and turned their gaze upward. Then it was that they noticed for the first time that there was a way to clamber up the cliff.

"Come, boys!" exclaimed the dashing young deadshot, who, though his face was pale, was as cool as ever. "This is the way to get up there, I reckon. We must find where the fiend went, and that very soon. Poor Arietta is worse off now than she would be if she was in the power of the outlaws."

His partners nodded, and up they went, keeping close behind him. But Hop did not go far up the rocky ascent. He paused when he got to the first ledge, thinking that he might better take a different route. Meanwhile Young Wild West kept straight on. There was a ledge above them that must have been at least a hundred feet from the bottom of the canyon, and they headed for it, Wild in the lead. With the loosened stones and dirt rattling down past them, they hurried on. In another minute they were there. Then it was that a simultaneous cry went up from their lips. As Wild and his partners reached the ledge they beheld a startling sight. Arietta had fainted, and was hanging limp upon the arm of the Mad Miner, who was waving a flaming skull over his head.

"Back!" he cried. "The girl is mine! Mine forever!"

Then as quick as a flash he stepped back from their view. Swiftly receding footsteps told them that he was getting away from them, but Wild caught hold of a jagged piece of rock and drew himself upward. Then he darted through a rift in the face of the cliff. Charlie and Jim were right at his heels now, and bent on catching the madman and saving Arietta, they ran swiftly along. Around a bend in the cleft they went and then they were dismayed to find that there was nothing but what appeared to be a solid wall of rock ahead of them. Wild looked ahead and then on either side, but there was no visible means of going any further, as far as he could see. Considering that the Mad Miner had only had a few seconds the start of him, this seemed puzzling, indeed. But Young Wild West was not the one to be baffled easily. Too many times had he been brought face to face with great difficulties.

"Boys," said he coolly, "the crazy galoot has tricked us. If he went through here, so can we. Hurry up! Make an examination. There must be a secret opening that is covered. We have got to find it."

But Charlie and Jim were already at work making a search. They were tapping the rock with the butts of their revolvers and listening for a hollow sound that would tell them that there was an opening of some sort beyond the wall. Wild advanced as far as he could go and tried tapping on the rock that barred further progress through the passage. In his judgment, the rock was not more than a few inches in thickness.

"Here we are, boys," he said. "This piece of

rock must be dislodged. We will have to get something to do it with, though. There is no use in trying to force our way through just by using our hands and feet. Jim, go and get a crowbar."

"All right, Wild," answered Dart, who was ready to do anything he was told.

He lost no time in descending to the level below and then he hurried to join those they had left waiting in the canyon. Jim was not long in reaching them. It happened that they had been unable to see the Mad Miner, though they had heard his cries, and also Arietta's screams. While he was gone Wild and Charlie used all their strength in trying to force aside the rock that barred their way. Though it trembled slightly from the pressure they brought to bear upon it, they could not dislodge it. In a little while Jim came back with the crowbar.

"Where is Hop?" our hero asked, he thinking that the Celestial might be of some service to them just then.

"I saw nothing of him," replied Dart. "He did not go back to the rest, either. He must be somewhere about, though. Probably he is trying to find Arietta on his own hook."

"Maybe he is. Well, never mind. Let me have that crowbar."

The boy took it, and the next minute he was working away like a beaver in an effort to get the bar under the rock, so it might be pried aside. Young Wild West, though a mere boy, was well experienced in such work. He went at in the right way, and in less than five minutes he forced the rock to yield to the pressure brought upon it. The scout lent his aid, and then it swung over and fell to the ground, narrowly missing falling upon the foot of the latter. A continuation of the passage was at once disclosed.

"Now then, boys, come on," said Wild. "I reckon we will soon get the galoot now. He is mad, beyond the shadow of a doubt; but if he harms a hair in Arietta's head I will forget that part of it. If we find that she is all right leave him to me. I reckon I can handle him."

Along the passage they ran, and the next minute they found it led into the vast cavern, part of which was occupied by the outlaws. But this made no difference to them. If the outlaws had numbered a hundred, and they knew they would be surely killed if they met them, they would not have hesitated. They had seen the plight of the girl, and that was enough. They did not blame her for fainting away, which was something that Arietta was not in the habit of doing. Charlie lighted a match when they had gone a short distance into the underground passage, for it was as dark as a pocket in there.

The whole place was a regular honeycomb, as has been stated, and there was no telling what minute they might step into some hole.

The lighted match lasted long enough for them to get a hundred feet, and when it burned out the scout lighted another. In this way they kept on until they saw daylight ahead, though rather faintly. It increased as they proceeded, however, and two minutes later they came to the identical spot where Hop had dropped down the chute.

"Thunder!" exclaimed the scout, in a hoarse whisper. "This ain't making much headway, not

if I know it. That galoot yer call ther Mad Miner has give us ther slip, Wild."

"Don't say that, Charlie. We have got to find him, that's all."

"Well, yer kin bet your life that I won't never give up till we do."

They moved away from the spot, treading softly, so they might not be heard by the outlaws. When they had gone a few feet along the wide passage that seemed a sort of gallery they came to a place where three passages branched from it. Young Wild West made up his mind what to do right away. There were three of them, so each could take a different direction and something might result from it. He quickly made known his thoughts and Charlie and Jim promptly agreed with him.

"You take the one to the right, Jim," the young deadshot said; "I will take the center one, and Charlie can go to the left. Be very careful, both of you, and in case you get into trouble just fire a shot."

They all understood what was to be done, and without anything further they set out.

CHAPTER X.—Arietta and the Mad Miner.

As Wild supposed, Arietta had been caught by the Mad Miner as she was going through the dark passage to join those waiting outside. The girl did not have the least chance, for the crazed man must have heard her footsteps, and was waiting for her. He picked her up as though she had been nothing more than an infant, and then he hastened outside with her, letting out his awful shriek as she called loudly for help. But he pressed his hand over her mouth then, and not until they got well toward the top of the cliff did she get the chance to make another cry. But he looked at her with eyes that blazed with anger then, and the girl was so terrified when she realized that she was in the power of a madman that she fainted away.

It could not have been many minutes that the girl remained in an unconscious state. When she did awaken to a realization of what had happened she found herself lying on a rude couch formed of skins, her hands tied and a bunch of rags stuffed in her mouth, so she could not cry out. It was a small cave that she was in, and a light was burning in one of the corners. As the girl looked at this she saw it was a human skull that was probably filled with some kind of grease, for there was a wick sticking above it, and it was this that was burning with a fitful blaze. There were cooking utensils hanging to the wall near a fireplace that had been built of flat pieces of stone, and there was a small table that was very rudely constructed near by, with a solitary stool close to it.

Across the furthest corner from the girl was a curtain of blankets sewed together, and as Arietta took in her surroundings and gradually regained her faculties, she saw the curtain move slightly. The next minute it was thrown aside and out stepped her captor. By a great effort she calmed herself and began to think of a way to get the best of the wild man. As he approached her a kindly expression shone from his eyes.

"It is too bad, young lady," he said in a voice that was almost as gentle as that of a mother talking to her babe. "I saw you as you came through the dark down there, and I had to take you for my own. I once had a little girl with hair just like yours, and eyes the same. She died, and so did her mother, and since that time I know not what has happened. But when I saw you I made up my mind that my little one had come back, larger grown, but my daughter. Speak! Is it so? Are you my little Jane?"

Arietta shook her head and managed to give a stifled gasp.

Instantly the madman dropped upon his knees and placed his hands upon the gag that was in her mouth. "Listen!" he said, with dramatic force. "They would come to take you from me, but you must not go. If you speak above a whisper, I will forget that you look like my dead child, and I will kill you!"

The last came from his lips more like a hiss than words, and the savage, unnatural light again shone in his eyes. The next minute he had removed the gag. He drew a gleaming knife from his belt and shook it before her eyes at the same time.

"I will do just as you say," she faltered in a trembling voice. "I am glad I look like your dead daughter, though I am not her. The dead cannot come back to life."

"How do you know that?" asked the man eagerly.

"I—I have always been taught that way, and I have never known it to happen."

"Well, girl, when you have lived as long as I have, and thought as much as I have, you will change your mind. They call me the Mad Miner, and I like it. I may be crazed, but I have not lost my memory altogether. I have gained in skill and cunning, though at times there is a cloud that comes over my brain, and I know not what I do. I am very rich, for I have gold back there," pointing to the curtain, "that is enough for one to live in luxury for a lifetime."

He paused and sat down before the girl, who had now risen to a sitting posture.

"You should not worry over those who have left you forever," said Arietta. "There is a long life ahead of you, and you should give up this wild way of living. Why, they say you are a fiend—that you catch your victims and kill them, and then go about with their hideous skulls. You—"

"Stop!" cried the Mad Miner, raising his finger. "I do not kill those who do not try to kill me. The skulls I use are those I pick up on the desert. There are many to be found there, for men starve and die in the search for gold. This is a bad country. But I know where to get the things I need, and sometimes I am gone from Death Canyon a week at a time. But I always come back, for here is my home, and here it always will be."

"I know you are a good man at heart," ventured the helpless girl.

"Yes, that is right. I am a good man at heart. Sometimes I think I am making a mistake, and then my mind goes blank again. I might be cured of my madness if I were placed in some institution where good treatment could be given me."

"Won't you untie my hands?" asked Arietta, hoping that he might give way to the request.

"Yes!" was the reply. "But don't think that you can get away from me. There is no way of doing it that you know of. Don't try it. If you do I may——"

He stopped abruptly, and then he quickly untied the rope that held her hands together.

"Don't try to get away," he said, in a low tone of voice. "You can never do it. You are mine forever! You are my daughter, Jane, who has come back to life, and who will live with me to give me comfort, even though her mother is not here."

Arietta said no more on that point. Rising to her feet, she took the stool and sat down. "How long have you lived in this cave?" she asked, after a rather lengthy pause.

The Mad Miner shook his head.

"I don't know," he retorted wearily; "but come, Jane! I will show you my gold. It will be yours when I am dead and gone. Think of that, Jane."

"I thank you very much for saying that," Arietta replied, as she arose from the stool.

He took her gently by the arm and conducted her to the blanket curtain. Dushing it aside, he forced her to go through, and then taking the flaming skull, he followed her. At first Arietta thought she was in a smaller apartment, which was really where the madman slept, but as the light filled the place she quickly saw an opening that led into another part of the cavern. The daylight came in from some place, too, and this was enough to make the girl keep up her courage. Into a wide cave they went, and then, still keeping hold of her arm, the Mad Miner turned and went toward the part where the light came through. It was probably a hundred feet from the rocky apartment occupied as a dwelling by the madman that they came to a halt on the verge of a precipice outside. But it was not the side that overlooked the canyon. Arietta could tell that right away. She was now looking over a vast tract of broken desert.

"See down there," said her captor, pointing to a ledge that was but a few feet below. "There is my gold mine."

The girl looked over and saw a hole in the ground, and right at the mouth of it was a pile of glittering nuggets.

"There is a fortune there!" she gasped. "You are indeed rich, my father."

As she said this a happy light shone in the eyes of the man.

"I am rich, and you will be rich when I am gone. But you must never leave me, child, as long as I am alive. I will live long, for I am strong and hardy, and the bullets of those who fear and hate me will never harm me unless they reach my head. I wear something that is bullet proof, child. I am invincible to my foes. There are bad men near us, but they fear me, and they dare not come to harm you. Your friends will search for you until they find they can never find you, and then they will give you up as lost and go on their way. But come! We will go back."

There was no use in raising any objections, but since she had seen where the madman's gold was, Arietta was more than satisfied to go back with

him. It might be that Wild, or some of the rest, had found the way there, and were waiting to take her from the crazed man. Back they made their way, and as the man had now released her from his grasp upon her arm, Arietta walked along free. She had a small revolver under her bodice, and she could easily have drawn it and shot him; but she would not do this, for he had not harmed a hair of her head, and she could not bring herself to do a thing like that. It would be arrant treachery, that was sure. Relying on her friends to save her, the girl followed him back to the little cave. The inner part was passed through, and when the curtain dropped behind her Arietta took her place upon the stool again. She looked around, but could see nothing that would indicate that anybody had been there during their absence. The Mad Miner went to the mouth of the cave and looked out at the sun. It was now nearly directly over his head, and with a nod, he came back.

"You must be hungry," he said. "You will eat of the best I have."

"Thank you," replied the girl. "I am getting hungry."

"Well," and a crafty look suddenly came in his eyes, "I will sit here, and you can get the meal ready. You will find provisions behind that board over there. That is my closet. The board is the door to it, though there are no hinges. I must get hinges for it, and then it will be all right."

He took his station where it was impossible for her to get out of the cave without being seized by him, so she went to the closet, as he called it, and found meat and other eatables there. She decided to go about it just as though she were in camp with her companions, and she worked away briskly. Noticing this, the Mad Miner went to the fireplace and started a fire.

"We will have some coffee with the broiled meat," he said.

Arietta nodded, and then he turned to the mouth of the cave and took his station there, as though he was doing guard duty. It took some little time to prepare the meal, and though she did not hurry much, the girl went on steadily, all the while hoping that her dashing young lover might come. If she had only known that he was very close at hand at that very moment probably she would have stopped in her work. Young Wild West was coming all right!

CHAPTER XI.—What Hop Did.

It will now be in order to turn our attention to Hop Wah, who decided to strike out for himself and make a search for Arietta. Hop only climbed as far as the first ledge, and when he saw Wild and his partners going on up, he turned to the left and made his way along the ledge, keeping his eyes open for anything in the line of an opening large enough to admit a person. As luck would have it, he quickly found one, and just as he entered it he heard the Mad Miner shout out the words to the effect that Arietta was his forever.

He decided to push through the aperture and try and find the man who had uttered them. He had not gone many feet before the aperture widened considerably, and then he pushed on swiftly. He

went up a short ascent, and then down again, until he found himself in a large, rocky chamber. The indistinct sound of voices now came to his ears, but Hop was now pretty certain that he had struck the right spot, so he listened. It was a man's voice, and the words were mere mutterings.

"Lat um clazy man, so be," the Chinaman thought.

After listening for a minute or two longer he pushed his way along the side of the cave, and then came to an opening through which he could see the blue sky and rocky formations on a vast desert. It occurred to him that he must have come through the cliff and was now looking out from the other side. Suddenly his eyes turned downward, and then it was he gave a violent start. Lying before an opening in the ground upon a ledge but a few feet below was a heap of golden nuggets. He quickly found a way to get down to the glittering pile, and the next minute he was weighing some of the nuggets in his hand. Tiring of this, he turned his attention to the opening in the ground. Inside the hole he saw a pocket with gold on all sides.

A pick, shovel and pan, such as miners use, lay there, which showed that the place had been worked. Putting a few nuggets in his pocket, he clambered back upon the upper ledge. Stepping back into the cave, he went on around, looking for some other outlet. In a very few seconds he came to the passage that led into that portion of the cavern that was occupied as a sleeping quarters by the Mad Miner. Then it was that he suddenly heard a man talking within a few feet of him. He listened and when he heard what he said he instantly became convinced that it was Arietta who was being addressed.

The longer he listened the more he became convinced that the "clazy man," as he called him, did not mean to harm a hair in the girl's head. When the Mad Miner invited Arietta to go with him and look at his gold mine, Hop crouched closer into the niche. As the curtain was lifted and the light filled the place he could see both the girl and her captor plainly. Waiting until they had passed into the back chamber beyond, the clever Chinaman arose and followed them softly. He saw the madman take the girl to the very ledge upon which he had been standing when he got sight of the glittering nuggets below, and then he crept up close enough to listen and hear what was said. Then he made up his mind to get back to the ledge. With a great deal of difficulty he managed to find his way back to the ledge from which he started.

"Maybe me better go findee Misler Wild and him partners. Len ley comee velly muchee quickee and takee Missee Alietta away ffrom um Mad Miner."

Without going down to those who were waiting he followed in the direction Wild and his partners had taken, and was soon upon the upper ledge. Then he followed the same route our hero had taken with Charlie and Jim, and passing through the place that had been opened by means of the crowbar, and finding the crowbar still there, the Chinaman gave a nod and continued his way. But there were so many passages this way and that that it was not long before he found that

he was lost. However, he retraced his steps and tried another route. This, too, failed, for he came to a spot where he could go no farther. But nothing daunted, he tried again, and at the expiration of perhaps fifteen minutes he suddenly came face to face with Cheyenne Charlie.

"Me velly gladee, Misler Charlie," declared Hop. "Me findee Missee Alietta and me comee to findee you and Misler Wild and Misler Jim."

"What!" cried the scout, in amazement. "You found Arietta, you say?"

"Yes, me findee. Um Mad Miner no hurtee her. She allee light. He say she um lillee girl lat he had, and he give her velly muchee gold, so be."

"Great gimlets!" exclaimed the scout. "Come on, you heathen galoot! We'll find Wild and Jim as quick as we kin, an' then we'll go an' git Arietta."

In less than five minutes the two had reached the spot where Wild and his partners had started to go in different directions. As luck would have it, Jim Dart appeared just then, and almost before he became acquainted with what Hop had discovered, Wild appeared from another passage. The three had been searching long, and they all had been discouraged.

"Hop found where Arietta is, and he says she's all right," the scout said. "Come on, he's goin' ter lead us to ther spot."

Stopping long enough to question him thoroughly, Wild gave an exclamation of delight and then all four started back for the ledge that overlooked the canyon. It was easy for them to retrace their steps to that point, and when they came to the crowbar Jim picked it up and carried it with him. Once out upon the ledge, they quickly descended to the lower one, and then Hop conducted them to the narrow fissure in the rock. As he had passed that way twice, the Chinaman had no difficulty in leading them through the passage. It was not long before they came to the cave, and then, wishing to prove that there was a pile of gold there, Hop led them out through the opening and pointed to it. The sight of the glittering nuggets fairly dazzled the eyes of our friends. Hop cautioned them not to make any noise, so they only spoke in whispers.

"How far is the cave from here?" Wild asked him.

"Velly lillee way, so be," was the reply. "Me showee you."

With Wild at his side he went on, stepping carefully, and they reached the inner apartment that was occupied as a sleeping quarters by the madman. As our friends paused there they could hear the clinking of tin plates, or something of the kind. Wild now pushed his way past the Chinaman, and stepping to the curtain, pushed it aside a few inches and peered out into the other cave. There was his sweetheart busy preparing a meal, while standing at the mouth of the cave was the Mad Miner, apparently in a very pleasant mood. He could see by the expression of Arietta's face that she was not very much frightened, and then it dawned upon him that the girl had shown sufficient cleverness to humor the man, and thus save herself from being harmed. He turned and beckoned to Charlie and Jim to come and have a look. The two did so, and when they saw how things were they were amazed.

"We must not hurt the man," said our hero, in a low whisper. You can readily see that he has not harmed Arietta, so we must not harm him. We'll spring upon him and make him a prisoner."

Charlie and Jim nodded to this, and then they prepared to throw aside the curtain and rush into the cave.

CHAPTER XII.—Conclusion.

Arietta soon had the meal ready.

"Come," she said, calling the man who had declared that she was never to leave him again.

"No," was the reply. "You sit down and eat. I will wait."

It was just then that the curtain moved slightly, and instinctively the girl turned her gaze in that direction. Then, to her great joy, it was pushed back, and the face of her daring young lover was disclosed. The girl could not help it, and with a cry of joy she sprang toward Wild.

The Mad Miner turned like a flash. "What is it, Jane?" he demanded.

Then Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart threw aside the curtain and sprang out. The Mad Miner uttered a snarl like that of an enraged beast. His mild manner was gone. Springing toward the girl, he cried out:

"My child shall not be taken from me! I will kill her first!"

Charlie shot out his right fist and knocked him down.

The Mad Miner got upon his feet with remarkable quickness. Then he uttered that awful cry of his and darted out of the cave. It all happened so quickly that neither Charlie nor Jim could catch him.

"After him, boys," said Wild. "I will take care of Arietta."

The scout was off like a shot, and after him went Jim Dart. The madman did not get so far ahead of them that they could not keep within hearing of his footsteps, so they kept right on. Into a passage he turned, and they followed. After turning this way and that, and following rises and descents, they soon found that they were getting dangerously close to the quarters of the outlaw band. A minute later they saw that he was running straight for it. As he reached the entrance he let out one of his screeching wails, and then he bounded right into the cave. Crack! Crack—crack—crack! A volley of revolver shots sounded and there was the sounds of a great scuffle going on. Creeping up stealthily, Charlie and Jim came upon an exciting scene. The Mad Miner was rushing about the cave, stabbing right and left. The outlaws were firing at him, but without effect. In less time than it takes to record it three men were on the ground mortally wounded from the quick knife-thrusts.

The madman let out another yell, and then Captain Harvey fell before a blow from the knife. Another and another went, for it seemed that they could not get out of his way. Suddenly one of the villains knocked the knife from his hand. But it was only a momentary triumph, however. The Mad Miner grabbed a revolver from the hand of another and then emptied its chambers. As he fired the last shot he staggered and fell to the

ground. Charlie and Dart looked over the scene. There was not an outlaw to be seen who was not either dead or dying.

Waiting a minute or two, they stepped into the rendezvous and approached the Mad Miner. He was lying still as he had dropped, and a quick examination told them that he was dead. Our two friends made an examination of the body and found it was encased in a coat of mail under the shirt. They were satisfied the way things had turned out, so they soon left the cave and made their way outside. When they got there they found Wild, Arietta and Hop just coming down from the ledge, which was but a short distance away.

"Whoopee!" shouted the scout, waving his hat. "Everything is all over with, Wild! The Mad Miner has passed in his chips, an' so has the whole blamed lot of ther outlaws."

Jim Dart joined in giving a genuine cowboy yell, and then Hop let out one of his peculiar whoops. They had not long in joining the rest of the party. It had been a long wait, but Anna and Eloise appreciated the safe return of Arietta all the more for it. Harry Muller was very pale, but when he saw them all coming back, safe and sound, his face lighted up.

The story was soon told, and then they went into camp and had dinner. As might be supposed, Arietta quickly recovered from the ordeal she had passed through when in the power of the Mad Miner. As soon as they had eaten dinner Wild suggested that they go and get the gold that had been given to Arietta.

"If we can find that he has any relatives living they shall have the mine," said Wild. "But in the meantime you can let Harry Muller work it on shares for you, Et."

"All right," replied the girl.

"Do you mean that?" the prospector asked.

They both assured him that they did, and then all hands repaired to the spot. It was not difficult to reach it, after they once knew the way. The pile of nuggets was divided into bags, and then they left and went back into the canyon. It was just then that the three men they had met that morning appeared. One of them fired a shot, and then there was a lively time for a few minutes. The result was that the three, who certainly must have belonged to the outlaw band, were shot down. It was near sunset when they rode into the mining camp, which was not so very far away.

It had taken the greater part of the afternoon to fix up matters, and when they got there everything was just to their satisfaction. Wild decided to remain there for a couple of days, and then strike out again for further adventures. Those they had met with since entering Death Canyon had surely been all our friends could wish for. But Arietta's experience with the Mad Miner was certainly far more thrilling than anything else that had happened. However, the clever Chinese had been smart enough to find her, and thus everything turned out all right.

Next week's issue will contain "YOUNG WILD WEST'S CRACK CAVALRY; OR, THE SHOT THAT WON THE DAY."

CURRENT NEWS

SILK UNDERWEAR HID SMUGGLER'S WHISKY

When police at Point Marion, Pa., arrested Mrs. Tessie Smith, thirty-five, well dressed and refined, they found in a suit case she carried six quart bottles of whisky in a piece of silk underwear.

Police were tipped off that Mrs. Smith was head of a band of rum smugglers.

A MOUNTAIN OF SULPHUR

A great mountain of sulphur has been rediscovered in the Banks group of the New Hebrides Islands, in the Southern Pacific Ocean. It was called Vanna Lava fifty years ago, when a French company worked its deposits. The London Times says that the mountain is one vast mass of sulphur, 99 per cent. sulphur, and the rest ash. It is 1,600 feet high and covers 100 square miles.

ROMAN CITY RUINS DISCOVERED IN SPAIN

The Imparcial publishes a report from Sant Ibanez of the discovery there of extensive remains of what apparently was once a Roman city.

Traces of a highway running in the direction of Astorga; cisterns, with piping of copper; gold coins, fragments of ceramics and vases filled with ashes are said to have been unearthed in the vicinity.

An investigation has been ordered by the Director of Foreign Arts.

WAITRESS GETS RICH REWARD

Waitresses will probably continue accepting tips, despite the fact that they are rather excited by the fortune of Elizabeth Hill, who has been rewarded by the gift of \$10,000 and a thousand acre ranch in Nebraska for constantly refusing tips in a railway restaurant at Council Bluffs, Iowa. She always said she was paid to give service.

"Old Man Dexter," who gave her the fortune, was always unable to make the girl take a tip. Once he mailed her \$100. She mailed it back. The money and deed for the land she has accepted came in a letter, which announced that the benefactor, who is 76 years old, was going to England for the rest of his life; that his wife and daughter were buried there, and that he wanted Elizabeth to accept for their sake, as "you deserve a better fate than working behind a restaurant counter."

READ THIS

DETEECTIVES developing hidden crimes by the most scientific methods of deduction form the basis of many of the perplexing stories issued in "Mystery Magazine." It may be by finger-prints or other clues, but the stories get very interesting and exciting as you follow the plot to the finish. Then there are stories of spooks and weird, unearthly things that make your nerves tingle with expectancy, and stories of crooks and other underworld characters who are brought to justice. Some of the yarns have a pretty little love theme, others are full of gripping adventures, and not a few deal with police cases. There's one department that many people will like, in which the writer shows you just exactly how fakers tell fortunes or show what your character is.

Every number contains a generous quantity of short articles, some just stories, others scientific facts, and still more, records of the queerest things that happen in the world. There is enough good reading matter in every issue to suit the taste of everybody, old and young. This magazine only costs ten cents a copy, yet it contains as much entertaining fact and fiction as some of the publications that cost twice as much. You can only judge by getting a copy and seeing for yourself. Then, if it doesn't suit you don't read another. But we feel so sure you will like it that we are willing to mail you a sample copy absolutely free of charge if you will send a request to us on a postal card, giving us your correct name and address.

FRANK TOWSEY, PUBLISHER, 168 WEST 23D STREET, NEW YORK

Six Silver Stars

—OR—

THE BOY TREASURE HUNTERS OF YUCATAN

By DICK ELLISON

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XXIV.—(Continued.)

"That's it!" echoed Harry. "See them go!"

They fled like flies before a fly flapper, and vanished within the building, while Sam came coolly down the steps.

"What about that?" he demanded, triumphantly.

"You killed or wounded several. I saw them fall!" cried Al.

"Yes, and let them lie where they fell, be they dead or wounded no one must go near them," replied Sam. "That settles it. They will not return."

Nor did they. But just the same Al never looked out of his hammock that night that he did not see Sam standing guard.

As soon as breakfast was over the march was resumed.

Sam scarcely spoke all day.

At night they camped on the bank of a stream.

Sam's Indians did the cooking and that night a peculiar dish of some sort of boiled greens was served to Col. Hefud, Mona and the boys, of which, as it tasted good, Al ate freely.

They found themselves unusually tired and sleepy as soon as supper was over, and as Sam assured them that all danger was over now, they at once sought their hammocks.

Al was asleep in an instant and it was so with the others. When they awoke the sun was high and the camp unusually still.

Al sprang up, and dropping out of his hammock, saw Col. Hefud coming toward him.

"Well, this is a pretty piece of business!" the latter exclaimed.

"What's the matter? Where is everybody?" cried Al.

"The matter is," replied the Colonel, "that Sam and his followers have decamped in the night. Those greens we ate were undoubtedly drugged or are themselves of a nature to make one sleep. I know I slept like a log, so did Mona. Oliver isn't awake yet. How about you?"

"Same with me," cried Al, "but how about our mules and our share of the treasure?"

"All right. The mules are further down stream, where there is a ford and so are my men and just as much of the gold as he agreed to give us, but the rascal has made off with the rest and takes his bunch with him. As for my Indians, I can't get a word out of them. They claimed to have slept through it all, too, but I don't believe a word of it."

"Well," said Al, "he seems to have played

square at all events, and if he chooses to go his way and leaves us to go ours, I don't see that we have any kick coming."

"Oh, I don't know," growled the Colonel. "If I could once have got the fellow in Belize perhaps there would have been another division of those selfsame jars of gold."

Perhaps Sam thought so, too, and that is why he deserted as he did.

At all events they saw no more of him and in due time the whole party landed safely at Belize, where Al and Oliver took passage for New Orleans, with their treasure, going on to New York by rail.

Both were ready to admit that it wasn't such a bad wind-up of their adventure after all.

They had been in a land where no white man had ever been; they had been in all kinds of stirring adventures, coming through without a day's illness or a scratch and with enough money to give them a good start in life.

Oliver banked his and went to sea again.

To-day he is the captain of a coasting steamer, married and very well-to-do.

Al carried out his plan and is now one of the most noted chemists in America. He has not yet married, but there are rumors that he soon intends to be, and that a pretty English woman now a widow, but who was once known as Miss Mona Heatheringford, will be his wife. The Colonel is long since dead.

Al went to Paris to study as proposed.

One day while walking on the Boulevard Hausmann, he saw a dark, stylish man pass in an automobile; with him was a white woman, evidently his wife, and two handsome dark-skinned boys.

It was surely Sam, but he never looked at Al, who learned that he was known in Paris as "Senor Prado," a Mexican, and was reputed very rich.

Al had some thought of calling on him. Indeed he wrote him asking if he might, but he received no reply, so he gave up the idea.

A year later at Christmas he received a package from Constantinople which was marked "Compliments of Senor Prado."

Opening it, Al found a scarf-pin made of six tiny silver stars, each with a diamond in the center.

And this was the last he ever heard of "Sam."

(The end.)

COMING NEXT WEEK

Charlie, the Chauffeur

— OR —

THE LUCK OF A WORKING LAD"

By DICK ELLISON

DON'T MISS THE OPENING CHAPTERS
OUT NEXT WEEK

FROM ALL POINTS

HOW STAGS' ANTLERS GROW AND DECAY

The annual growth and decay of a stag's antlers is one of the most marvellous happenings in nature.

In the late summer the growth is complete, and the stags spend their time rubbing off the velvet against the tree trunks. Then at the end of September the fighting season begins, and fierce battles are fought for the possession of a mate. During the winter everything becomes quiet again, and in the early spring the antlers gradually become dead and drop off, leaving the animal miracle to begin again.

GEM IN GARAGE

A diamond stud worth about \$1,500 lay for two days on the floor of a local garage in Albany, Ore., about two weeks ago.

After the owner had been found and the stud forwarded to him the circumstances of its loss and recovery became known.

The stud was owned by Dr. H. D. Coventry of Culver City, Cal., and was forwarded to him by A. F. Holyn, manager of the garage in which it was lost and found. Dr. Coventry passed through Albany by auto the day before Christmas. After he had made a purchase in this garage he discovered the loss of the stud. Two days later the stud was found.

FIND ACIDS IN CORN COBS

The common corn cob, which heretofore has been a waste product on the farm, may come to be considered a valuable article of commerce as a result of experiments conducted by Professors E. B. Fred and W. H. Peterson of the University of Wisconsin and reported to the Wisconsin Agriculturist. Corn cobs, it was discovered, are rich in acetic and lactic acids, both of which are used extensively in the industries.

When the corn cobs are partially water soaked and inoculated with the bacteria lactobacillus pentoaceticus, equal quantities of acetic and lactic acid are produced. If the yields on a commercial scale are equal to the laboratory results, every ton of corn cobs will yield more than 300 pounds of acetic and 320 pounds of lactic acid.

There are produced in the United States alone more than 20,000,000 tons of corn cobs yearly. A small amount of these is used for pipes or in feed, but the great bulk usually is discarded.

Acetic acid is used largely in the dye industry and lactic acid is extensively used in the leather industry. Both also are used in many technical operations in various other industries.

ELECTRIC SHOWER THRILLS ALASKA

Advices received at Seattle, Wash., from Tanana, Alaska, record some interesting details regarding an atmospheric phenomenon, following a period of extreme cold weather

The air was very still and dry and heavily charged with electricity. Two persons shaking hands received a severe shock and a burning sensation through the whole body. Telegraph and telephone wires sang and purred so loudly they were audible for several miles. Husbands kissing their wives were treated to the identical shock experienced in shaking hands. Two dogs were observed to anger and fly at each other, but when the jaws of each struck the other's body both went howling in opposite directions. Some ravens flying through the rarified air passed sufficiently close to each other to cause crackling noises, similar to the spluttering of a wireless receiving set.

The charged condition continued for several hours and was followed the same evening by a remarkable display of the Aurora Borealis. Accompanying its brilliancy were flashes of red and green in riotous irregularity.

At Koyokuk an Indian medicine man, less frightened by the strange electrical atmosphere than his tribesmen, attempted to console his followers by rubbing with the hands, but his touch produced so much discomfiture he was driven from the community house to his own hut.

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My Adventure

By JOHN SHERMAN

I had been settled more than a year upon my coffee estate in the wild jungles of Ceylon, when one morning, during the idle season, as I stood before my bungalow, gaping, stretching, and wondering how I might best amuse myself for the day, a coolie servant came up to me, heated and panting, and placed in my hands the following note:

"DEAR SIR:—Will you come over at once to my plantation, and join in the chase or hunt of a 'rogue' elephant, which is abroad somewhere in the vicinity, and committing sad depredations, to the great terror of the natives, who fear him more than they do the Evil One? It is the duty of every man who can bring a good nerve and a rifle to turn out in defense of his surroundings, to say nothing of the sport. Hoping to receive a favorable answer through the bearer, Monshee, in case you do not bring it yourself, I am, dear sir,

Yours most truly,
"CHARLES HOLLINGSWORTH."

"Mango Hill Retreat."

Nothing at the moment could have given me more pleasure than this invitation to set off in quest of a "rogue" elephant—for the sport would certainly have that spice of danger so necessary to quicken blood that had become too sluggish under the enervating influence of the sweltering tropics.

"Tell your master I am coming, Monshee," said I, as I turned away to get my rifle and ammunition, including zinc balls—for lead is too soft for an elephant's head—and order my horse under saddle in the quickest possible time.

Half an hour saw me on my way to Mango Hill Retreat, distant ten miles, with three coolies running alongside and keeping pace with my impatient gallop; and as I dash along, let me tell you what the term "rogue elephant" means, in case you never heard it before.

In the forests and jungles of Ceylon, at the time I lived there, there were hundreds of wild elephants, which generally moved about in small herds, and were not usually dangerous to man, though quite destructive to property—so much so that the government had set a price upon the head of each.

In herds, as I have said, these huge animals were but little feared, even by the natives; but it occasionally so happened, from what cause I have never been able to learn, that an old tusker would become detached from his companions, and, like a maddened human Malay, seem to devote the remainder of his life to attacking and killing every living thing he could reach, whether man or beast; and all from pure malice—from an infernal fury that nothing but his own death could appease.

With one of these furious monsters abroad, no one was safe.

Fences were no barrier to his progress; a coolie hut might be crushed like the shell of an egg; a bungalow be brought crashing down about the ears of the masters; and even a whole village has been half destroyed, and the inhabitants put to flight, by a single beast.

In the language of the country, this dangerous animal was termed a rogue elephant—though "mad" elephant would have been by far a more appropriate appellation.

When one of these was abroad, it was the duty of every man, as the note to me expressed, to turn out and hunt him to the death; and I was now hastening forward to perform the part of a good citizen.

When about half-way between my house and Hollingsworth's, in a wild, romantic part of the country, just where the road or path I was pursuing led down into a dark valley across a bright stream into a strip of level jungle, the coolies running by my side suddenly stopped and yelped out in terror, pointing to some huge fresh footprints that the rogue elephant had just passed.

"How do you know these impressions were not made yesterday?" I inquired, stopping to examine them.

"See, master!" returned a bright-eyed fellow called Lunekee, pointing to the bushes against which the huge body of the animal had pressed—"him brush off dew."

"Ah! very true—you are right. Well, then, he may be near, and perhaps we may meet and conquer him alone, which would be a triumph indeed!"

"Him plenty much savage—fight like mischief!" rejoined Lunekee, looking timorously around at his timid companions, and evidently willing to forego all glory which could only be gained at so much personal risk.

"But I have my rifle," said I, "two barrels—zinc balls—and am a pretty sure shot, and if I can find him, I am determined to try my hand."

Just at this moment, as if in answer to my challenge, there came a loud, bellowing, trumpeting roar from the deep jungle before me, followed by the rustling, snapping, and crashing sounds of some tremendous body making a quick way through a dense thicket.

"Him a-coming—him a-coming!" cried the frightened coolies; and they suddenly vanished like the witches of Macbeth, but rather into a thick forest than "thin air," leaving me to run or stay, as inclination might prompt.

I must confess that inclination pleaded earnestly for an inglorious retreat, and my gallant steed was evidently of the same mind, for he wheeled, reared, plunged, and would have gone off like a shot if I had not sawed him down to a fine dance. How could I shoot from the back of such a beast?

Whiz! flash! rush! what is that? A spotted deer passed me like a bolt of lightning scared by that terrific trumpeting and crashing, which makes even the boldest beast of the jungle tremble. Shall I stand and await his onset? for he is evidently coming this way, and will soon be here. No; my horse is too restive—the ground too uncertain; better get my first view of the monster from the top of yonder hill.

Away I go, horse and rider of one mind this time, and in a minute have wheeled upon an elevation that overlooks the spot where I first heard the answering challenge of everybody's foe.

There he comes—tusks first, and huge ones, too, showing he is an old bull—trunk up, trumpeting out defiance.—eyes fiery red and awfully wicked, and tail lashing his sides in fury.

Thank heaven, there is some distance between us, and I yet have the chance of fight or flight.

"Better run much, else climb tree a good deal, master!" says a voice over my head; and looking up in surprise, I see Lunekee snugly posted in the upper branches of a tall tree, and another glance shows his companions similarly situated to the right and left of him.

If I fight the elephant, I must depend on myself and horse, and count nothing on my timid servants, or any human aid. Am I prepared for the risk?

I look down at the man beast, and he looks up at me; and then, without half the consideration that I have taken in the matter, forward he comes, crushing the bushes, snapping the smaller trees like pipe-stems bent on my destruction.

It is a little too much of the dare—of the bravado—to spit my easily excited and not over-amiably temperament; and so, slipping down from my snorting horse, and passing the bridle over my left arm, I call out in defiance:

"Come on, you savage monster, and get what you don't seek! Be it life or death, I will have one shot at you now; then see who is lord of the forest—man, with his puny strength and giant intellect, or brute, with his tremendous physical power and blind instinct!"

I aim at his forehead, but wait for him to come near, with my frightened horse pulling at the bridle, and making my sight unsteady. On he comes with his mad rush and thundering crash—a sight to make any nervous man's heart flutter like a caged bird, and when within twenty paces of me, bang! go both barrels.

He is hit in the head, but not killed; and madder than ever with the sting of pain, he flourishes his trunk, trumpets forth his wild fury, and increases his speed, to reach and crush me like a troublesome moth. There is nothing for it now but flight—swift flight; a few seconds more and he will be upon me, and I shall be among the things that were!

Fairly swinging myself upon my horse, with an agility worthy of a Comanche Indian, I give my noble beast the spur and the rein, and away we go over the hill at breakneck speed—rocks, bushes and trees not once considered in our race for life.

Seeing my danger the coolies posted beyond the reach of the elephant now shout and scream to attract his attention and draw him from the pursuit. He hears the noise, glances upward with his fiery eyes, and turns to seek the nearest foe.

The tree of Lunekee receives his mad favor; and, rushing at that, he butts it an awful blow with his huge tusks—a blow that jars and shakes it like a small earthquake, makes every limb and leaf quiver, and almost unseats the poor fellow, who clings to it with all his strength and hopes of life.

Then he seizes it with his trunk, bellows forth his rage, exerts all his mighty force, and bends and shakes it as I might bend and shake a birch; and then, retreating to gather headway, he butts it again, ripping off the bark and goring it with his tusks, but failing to bring down his human prey.

But this time he seems to have forgotten me altogether; but I have not forgotten him.

Checking my horse at a safe distance, I proceed to reload my two barrels with zinc balls in the greatest possible haste; and before he is satisfied to turn and seek another victim, I spur my horse up to a dangerous vicinity, get him quiet for a moment, just in the nick of time, and blaze away again directly at the monster's head.

This time—thank Heaven!—my aim has been true; and both balls go through his thick skull, and sink into his brain. He stops, staggers, reels—gets a dim view of me—tries to make another charge—steps out feebly—totters, and falls with a loud crash, sending forth the wildest bellows of rage and pain, and then lies so helplessly on his huge side that even a child need no longer fear him.

A few half-smothered groans, some convulsive jerks, a quivering throughout the great mass, and all is over; the body and limbs grow still, and the furious, formidable, dreadful rogue elephant is dead.

No general after his victory ever felt his triumph more triumphantly than I did as I walked up, seated myself on the dead monster of the wilderness, and received, like a king upon his throne, the congratulations and praises of my loyal servants who now gathered around me, shouting and dancing.

Leaving the beast in their charge, I remounted my horse and finished my ride to Mango Hill Retreat, where I found Hollingworth and some half a dozen others only waiting for my arrival to begin the perilous hunt to which I had been invited.

When I told them of my adventure, they could hardly credit my story, and rode with me to be confirmed of its truth. The result made a great man of me in all my region, and probably no one act of my life ever afforded me so much satisfaction, taken in all its bearings, as my encounter with, and destruction of, that savage rogue elephant.

ECONOMICAL

Jacob Bowder of Mason City, Ia., practicing what he calls "a careful system of buying and cooking," has made public an inventory of his household expenses for five and a half months, for himself and wife, which he challenges any one to beat.

The total amount spent was \$72.50, excluding rent. Everything bought was of good quality, he says, and they had three square meals a day, with meat and everything necessary for health and happiness.

"Economy is merely a condition of mind," says Bowder. "Nowadays folks spend altogether too much for things they would be better off without. High cost of living need have no worries for the average man who will plan rightly."

WILD WEST WEEKLY

NEW YORK, MARCH 3, 1922

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

OYSTER CHAMPIONSHIP WON BY NEW ORLEANS MAN

Mike Algero won the oyster shucking championship by opening 4,944 bivalves in five hours and fifty-five minutes in the public square here.

Bill Smith was second, his count being 4,387, while Joe Pinell opened 4,357. Cash prizes aggregating \$300 were offered by the Oyster Dealers' Association, New Orleans, La.

THE MAKING OF MUMMIES

Dr. Edmond Bartha of Paris, who has for many years studied Egyptian mummies from the chemical point of view, believes he has discovered an embalming fluid that will maintain a lifelike appearance in corpses for from 20 to 50 years. He holds that his fluid is similar to that used in the time of the Pharaohs; but whereas the incisions were then made through the carotid artery, femoral incisions are used in the new practice. The long-lost secret may have been found.

ADMITS FAILURE OF VOLSTEAD ACT

Enforcement of the Volstead act in Nevada was admitted to be a failure by United States Attorney William Woodburn in an address before the Lions' Club in Reno.

Outside of Reno, said Woodburn, prohibition is unknown in Nevada. In parts of the State, he added, even county officials and peace officers are engaged in making liquor and operating stills.

Federal officers have information, he said, that more than 200 householders in Reno are manufacturing liquor in violation of the Eighteenth Amendment. He declared city, county and State officers fail to co-operate with the Federal agents in enforcing the dry law.

GOLD NUGGETS FOUND IN CHICKENS' GIZZARDS

While the Black Hills is the gold producing section of South Dakota, gold reports come in from other sections occasionally. Small particles of gold have been found in the crop and gizzards of fowls killed for the table.

The latest in this line are reports of gold found in the gizzard of a goose killed for a dinner on

the farm of Albert Heinisch near Belvidere. While gold is found generally over the Black Hills, the old gold hunters say "gold is where you find it," and they hunt in all kinds of formations for the precious metal. Whether there is any gold in any other portion of the State other than in the Hills to warrant attempts at hunting for it, a number of years ago Narcelle, mixed blood of the Cherry Creek section, brought in several good sized nuggets which he exhibited and declared he knew where more could be found, but would never give out any information as to where he secured them. He finally had the nuggets manufactured into stick pins and other ornaments. He intimated the find was not in any portion of the Black Hills, and it is possible that he picked the nuggets up along Cherry Creek or in some gravel bar on Cheyenne River, which drains the whole of the Black Hills section.

LAUGHS

"Yes," said the eminent specialist to the tramp who had called upon him, "I will examine you carefully for ten dollars." "All right, Doc," said the tramp resignedly, "do dat, an' if you find it I'll give you half."

"Did you ever tell that young man that late hours were bad for one?" asked the father at the breakfast table. "Well, father," replied the wise daughter, "late hours may be bad for one, but they're all right for two."

"This is the third time you have been here for food," said the woman at the kitchen door to the tramp. "Are you always out of work?" "Yes'm," replied the itinerant. "I guess I was born under a lucky star."

"Yes, siree," said the autoist proudly, "I haven't paid a cent for repairs on my machine in all the ten months I've had it." "So I've heard," replied his friend. "The man who did the repairs told me the very same thing."

"Say, Pa, what is the difference between a visit and a visitation?" Fond Parent—A visit, my boy, is when you go to see your Grandmother Jones, and a visitation is when your Grandmother Jones come to see ns.

Spurgeon was once asked if the man who learned to play a cornet on Sunday would go to heaven. The great preacher's reply was characteristic. Said he: "I don't see why he should not, but"—after a pause—"I doubt whether the man next door will."

Miss Caustique—Do tell me, Mr. Addlepate, how do you manage to keep your hands so soft? Mr. Addlepate—I always sleep with my gloves on, you know. Miss Caustique—How interesting. And do you sleep with your hat on, too?

A FEW GOOD ITEMS

BODY OF A RICH RECLUSE FOUND IN "HAUNTED HOUSE"

"The "House of Blazes," as Nyack's "haunted house" is known, has justified its title with the discovery of the frozen body of a man, huddled into the corner of a second-floor room, with the stairs creaking and the wind groaning through the cracks. The body came to light when a gang of adventurous boys dared each other to venture in and explore the witch-ridden house.

The man was identified as Charles De Graff of Highland, N. Y. He had \$126 in his pockets, while bankbooks which he carried recorded deposits of \$4,000.

"JACK THE PEEPER" KEEPS POLICE BUSY

"Jack the Peeper," using a twenty-foot ladder, is keeping the police busy at night. The other evening the women in the household of Samuel E. Tillou at 169 Hornblower avenue, Belleville, N. J., while in a room on the second floor, heard a noise at a window. They quietly went downstairs and through another window saw a man on a ladder peeping into the lighted room on the second floor. They telephoned for the police and the peeper fled, carrying away the ladder.

Miss Gladys Correll, who also lives at 169, and the family of Harry S. Clinnock, Jr., had a similar experience. On one of these occasions the peeper abandoned his ladder in his hurry to get away, but no one could identify it.

TRAP GRAVEYARD GHOST

The ghost of Wrightstown is a thing of the past. For about five weeks it inhabited the village cemetery.

Every night between 9 and 10 the ghost was seen lighting up the cemetery. Finally it became too much for the village fathers and they called volunteers to check the prowler. A half dozen high school boys volunteered and they camped in a secluded spot. Right on the schedule the light flashed, the figure in white moved forward with a hesitating step and the high school boys charged.

The "ghost" was caught. A farmer boy was the spectre in white and he carried with him an incandescent light attached to a 300-foot cord connected with a battery hung in a tree.

A MODERN CRUSOE

When the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's steamship Ebro arrived recently with passengers and mail from Valparaiso and other ports on the West Coast of South America, Captain E. E. Duncan said that the vessel had paid a visit to the Island of Juan Fernandez, 300 miles off the coast of Chile, and known generally as Robinson Crusoe's Island.

The captain said that the trip from Valparaiso took five days and was arranged by the agent of

the company in Valparaiso at the request of about 250 American tourists who had come over the Transandean railroad from Buenos Aires. Purser H. T. Browne got up a fancy dress ball and dinner on board which yielded \$1,000 for the children belonging to the 300 families living on Crusoe's Island, who support themselves by fishing. Huge lobsters weighing twelve pounds and measuring two feet over all, the purser added, are caught off the island and sent alive in fast sailing schoolers to Valparaiso, where they fetch a good price, having an unusually delicate flavor.

The island is about thirty miles in circumference and has a chain of ancient volcanic peaks. Tropical vegetation is kept alive by heavy dews which fall like rain every night. The passengers visited the cave where Alexander Selkirk lived, and climbed up to Selkirk's lookout, where the marooned mariner watched fourteen years for a vessel to come and take him off. Juan Fernandez has a wireless station now, maintained by the Chilean Government, and one policeman. By previous arrangement, when the Ebro anchored in Shelter Bay, a modern Robinson Crusoe came off in a native boat with his umbrella and parrot, carried by man Friday, and welcomed the passengers to his island.

THE AIRPLANE IN PEACE

Now that the great war is over, the airplane, which played so large a part in it, is being used for the purpose of peace.

Airplanes help the fishermen. They fly over the sea and spot the shoals of herrings, of pilchard or mackerel, and send the news to the fishing boats. They talk of using airplanes to round up the vast herds of caribou, or wild reindeer which roam over the wastes of Northern Canada.

Planes are being used for exploring Central Africa, and even for flying over the unknown ice fields of the far Arctic. In Australia the airplane is found to be immensely useful on the huge sheep ranches, some of them as large as an English county. A man in a plane can cover as much ground in a day as he could in a month on horseback. He can find where the sheep are grazing, whether dingoes are attacking them, and the condition of the water supply.

The latest use for the airplane is for catching water fowl, alive. In the Sacramento Valley of California are great flats haunted by vast flocks of wild ducks, geese and swans.

A plane was fitted with two funnel-shaped nets, and flown across these flats. The rush of the plane through the air kept the nets out stiff and straight, and the pilots say that it was most exciting business, swooping after the whirling flocks of fowl. They found that the plane was faster than any of the birds, but could not dodge or maneuver so quickly as they.

However, in three days' flying, they caught 500 birds. Keeping fifty of the younger ones, they liberated the rest. These young ones are for stocking private ponds and lakes.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

SAW HUNDREDS OF DEAD WHALES

That the monsters of the deep fight in groups as well as engage in personal encounters, is testified to by Captain G. Evered Poole, a Commissioner in the Gold Coast Colony, who writes the following to his brother concerning an experience during his voyage from England:

"Between Sierra Leone and Sekondi we steamed through, for over a hour, a blood-red sea, and saw some hundreds of whales dead or dying on the surface of the water. Some were just able to move slowly along; few, if any, could move quickly. There must have been a sanguinary battle, supposed to have been put up by sword-fish.

"It was a most appalling sight, and the extent of the bloody expanse must have represented the death of many more whales than were visible. No one on our ship had ever seen or even heard of anything approaching such a spectacle before."

RATS MENACE BUDAPEST

Rats and mice are migrating in swarms from the Russian famine area and Budapest is now overrun with them. All efforts to rid the city of this scourge have failed and the devastation caused by them goes on apace.

The market halls, food stores and warehouses are swarming with the rodents, which run about even in the daytime. So dangerous have they become that when disturbed they will turn and show fight.

The situation is aggravated by the dearth of cats. During the war, when food was scarce, thousands of families ate their cats. Since then the increasing demand for cat fur has taken a further toll. As a consequence, the comparatively exorbitant price of 3,000 to 4,000 kronen is being offered for a kitten by shopkeepers.

In some villages peasants have turned to the now lucrative business of cat breeding.

GOLD THAT DISAPPEARS

Do you know how gold shows its dislike for sea-water, especially that of the Atlantic Ocean?

Many shipments of gold have been sent to America recently in discharge of our debts, and every time a curious thing always happens. When the gold reached its destination and the American officials weighed it carefully, it was found to have lost weight during the voyage.

At first, everyone imagined the cause to be that the scales in America and other countries differed, but a test of the various scales showed that they were exactly the same.

Then it was that experts investigated the mystery. After many tests it has been discovered that during its journey across the Atlantic the action of the sea-water caused the gold to "sweat."

It is usual to pack the metal in stout kegs, squeezing it as tight as possible. But any way in which the gold is packed it always loses weight.

Now the coins are allowed to grind against each other, thus wearing them down a little, and a regular allowance is made for the loss.

FOREST RANGERS RESCUE ELK

After an arduous trip of fifty miles into the mountainous region at the headwaters of Dunganess River, two forest rangers succeeded in releasing a herd of eighty or ninety wild elk, snowbound in a draw or hole and which were on the verge of death by starvation.

By a queer coincidence Eddie Hubbard, carrying mail by airplane between Seattle and Victoria, Canada routed his homeward trip inland over the foothills of the Olympic Mountain to avoid a strong gale on Puget Sound. Skirting close to the tops of the forest trees he observed the wild elk snowbound in a natural inclosure of drifted snow. When he reached home he notified the State Game Commissioner's office of his belief, who at once ordered an investigation.

Alex McPherson and George Gates of Quilcene, Wash., started at once over a well known trail carrying provisions on pack horses. The fifty miles into the wilderness was made in two days and the elk located. The animals were belly deep in snow floundering about, subsisting on fir boughs and moss. Breaking through a snow-drift barrier, the elk gamely followed the men and their horses down into the valley where grazing material flourished in abundance. Of the exhausted animals but two fell dead after release.

The brave act is being heralded throughout Elkton fraternity and the two rangers will be presented with a suitable reward.

The Olympic elk usually foretell big snowstorms and hurry into the valleys, but this bunch herded up together in a sheltered hole and were cut off from food.

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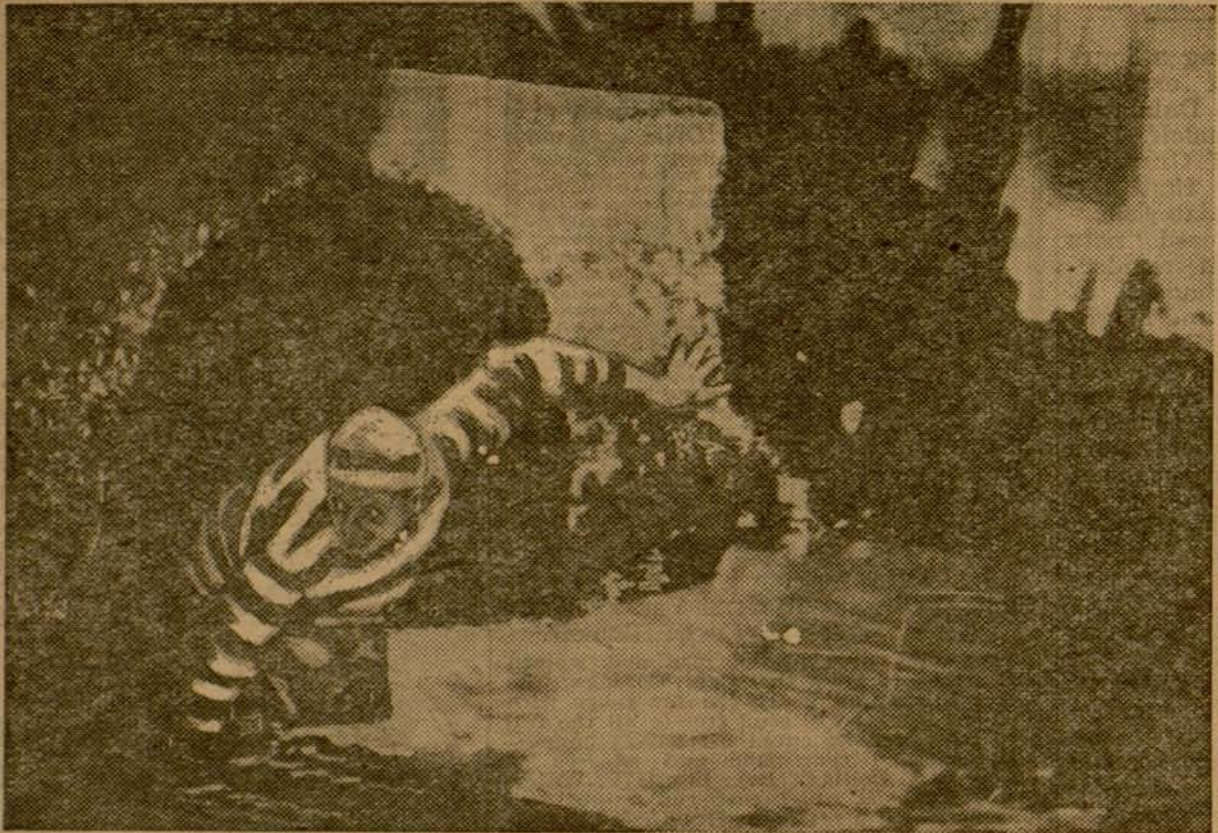
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