THE QUARTERBREED

A Tale of Adventures on An Indian Reservation

Robert Ames Bennet

Hardy started after these last, hold- | eh?" mocked Vandervyn. "By-by! I'll

CHAPTER XX-Gontinued. -11-

Mumbling an apology, Dupont hastily unfolded the deed, skimmed him to look up.

the spur ridge of the butte.

"The devil!" he exclaimed "What brings him back here?"

"Cap! It sure is Cap!" muttered think he's got on to the game, do you?" had.'

"Then why d'you think he's-" "To enter the contest!" divined wire Washington and have him put under arrest for disobeying orders."

"Hold on!" cautioned Dupont, "What if he does try his luck? In the mountains there ain't no horse nor mare neither can break up your pinto com-

Vandervyn's face cleared. "You ought to know. I'll chance it if-" "Ain't no chance to it," put in Dupont. "It's a dead cinch."

"He'll think he's going to do me," exthen Marie. I don't want her to see

"If she's willing. I'll see," qualified Dupont. "Look out you don't slip up. I'll tend to my end. So long-good

He rode off down the butte side of the coulee.

Vandervyn cantered straight across, and met Hardy a few yards below the tent of the commissioners.

"Good day, captain," he spoke in civil greeting. "I am surprised to see you back here. Have your orders been countermanded?"

"No," replied Hardy with equal civility. "I have resigned."

Vandervyn could not conceal his blank astonishment. "Not-not re-

signed from the army?" "Yes. I telegraphed the war department, received an answer, and mailed my resignation and application for leave of absence to my commanding officer at Vancouver barracks. As an officer it was not proper for me to en-

not return until Vandervyn and the

named as the corners of the mineral- vyn. land boundary.

Dupont. "Nom d'un chien! You don't ing his mare. He gave her no grass dians had moved away with their te- brought her up so close behind the lop-"Wouldn't do him any good if he of cats. Both morning and afternoon house he caught a glimpse of two In- beast to sprinting speed. Hardy fol-Vandervyn. "There's time enough to did not cross over to the reservation lop. side, much less go to the agency.

still and clear, with the promise of burning heat by noon.

spirits began wandering about the oughbred. camp or fidgeting with their packs. Nearly all the older and more experithe shade of their tents.

Two hours before the time set for ding, they cracked many dry jokes on ened. the grand chances of the tenderfoot. Their own picks and shovels were as light as such tools could be made without impairing their efficiency, and vyn's pack was swollen.

not Vandervyn, who was looked upon denly deepened. with suspicion by the crowd. Soon there was a gathering of a moblike a committee of inquiry.

We want to know if you've got a as lightly as possible. frame-up to have some feller meet you with your pack animals over in the mountains."

"No," replied Hardy. "There are four days' rations in my saddlebags. A poncho is all one needs in sleeping before a fire this time of year."

"You ain't got no tools," criticized a man who had been drinking. "The same is true of several among

you." Hardy rejoined.

One of the cowboys who was included in this remark called back resonant-"You've been into the mountains. bet you a blue chip you've got a good spect spotted, ready for branding." am not making any bets," said dy. "You have heard all I know the trail. Mr. Vandervyn has the trip several times. He was me during the one trip I made. no objection to your questoning about it."

re was some muttering over this. ardy's manner was so cool and hat the incipient mob left him, raggled over to where Vanderid hired an expert to throw the nd hitch on his ridiculous pack. turned his back on them, and grooming the satiny coat of his His unconcern was well foundlatever means Vandervyn used, ere sufficient to satisfy the The muttering soon ceased, men dispersed.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Race.

commissioners came down agency barely in time to identification of the heir Last of all Hardy ndervyn identified themhurried over to the end of es remaining. Vandervyn er with eager excitement, o attempt to conceal the illed and waved his hand ssioners, and looked about vy or malice in his look. appeared handsomer or

> commissioners se, thrust a small pistol

ream. There were, however, enough hasty ones to raise a done," splashing and turmoil, as, whooping and yelling, they spurred their po-Hardy at once mounted his mare, pinto. He was followed by a large cently unshed could not be seen.

commissioners had left for the agency. ing his mare to her usual steady trot. tell Marie you'll be along later." That evening he drew up the legal When he came up the road to the head when an oath from Vandervyn caused gone into the mountains, and frankly striding mare began to pass ponies gait far from easy on even a mounstated that he knew of none other whose riders had thought better of tain-bred horse's knees. Hardy folcoulee bank to where the road topped prominent peaks which had been still loping in swift pursuit of Vander-

> The rest of the evening and most of of the agency terrace. He saw noththe following day he spent in groom- ing of Dupont or Marie, and the In- into a fast gallop. A few minutes and little water, but a good allowance pees. But in the rear of the warehe took her out for short rides up the dian policemen removing the load from lowed at an easier yet swift pace that coulee, and each time repeatedly Vandervyn's pack pony. His face again brought him near, as the pinto climbed and descended the bank. He clouded. He put the mare into a gal- slackened to a lope.

All the way to the head of the val-The day set for the opening dawned ley Hardy held to a steady gallop. One trot. The mare had to walk. Beyond after another, he passed the remaining was a long stretch of broken country leaders. The best of the ponies were that favored the pinto. He could jog After breakfast the more uneasy no match in speed with the big thor-

As Hardy overhauled and forged past enced men gave their ponies a feed of Vandervyn, the young fellow turned oats, and stretched out to lounge in and met his gaze with a look of mocking hate. Hardy glanced back several times, prepared to fling himself ulted Vandervyn. "Let him register, the start Vandervyn appeared, and flat alongside the pommel of his sad-He's come back for the mine first; crossed over to the camp. He was die. His uneasiness did not lessen riding his pinto and leading a pack when a few minutes later Vandervyn him or to know he has come back. pony. When the old prospectors saw halted, and scrambled down from the You have your deed. Suppose you his heavy pick and shovel and large, trail to get a drink out of the creek. poorly lashed pack of food and bed- The crease in Hardy's forehead deep-

Ahead, the walls of the canyon were sloping back into the widened valley where had been the first Indian camp. Dogs, Indians and tepees, all were their packs were as lean as Vander- gone. Only a brush-walled dance lodge remained to mark the camp site. Hardy alone divined the deceptive As the mare pounded past, she curved mockery of his rival's cumbersome dis- her outstretched neck toward the play. But he was bound by his word lodge and whinnled. Hardy heard no in the resilient stride of the mare as and could say nothing. It was he, and answer to the call, but his frown sud-

He reached forward and stroked group, that rumbled awhile, and ended been the race from the agency, she by presenting itself before Hardy as had not turned a hair. His frown re-"You been agent at this here reser- he was still uneasy. He balanced him-

Ascending the mountainside, he was compelled to content himself with the mare's nervous, long-strided walk. But whenever the trail was nox too steep or rough, he put her into a trot, and varied the pace with an occasional short gallon.

well into the mountains. He came to a succession of steep climbs and descents that held the mare down to a walk. Presently he thought he heard hoofbeats behind him. He listened. He had not been mistaken. An tmshod horse was coming up with him at a steady jog trot.

It seemed impossible that Vandervyn's pinto could have so recuperated trail at a trot. Hardy gazed back, exgolden sheen on the unmistakable

At the first small break in the descent Hardy dismounted, unsaddled, and sponged out the mare's mouth and nostrils with water from his canteen. He then shook out and refolded his Navajo saddle blanket, and started to resaddle. But before he buckled the cinch-strap he shifted the pistol from his breast to a front pocket in his riding breeches.

He was vigorously grooming the mare when Vandervyn came jogging down through the thickets of tall brush that grew close on each side of the trail. He did not pause in his rubbing until the nimble-footed unshod g line. There was a scant pony ambled into view, less than a dozen yards up the trail. Then he glanced about, straightened, and stood staring. The pony was a pinto.

"Lots of come-back to a bronco, captain," purred Vandervyn, "Sorry to see that you've stove up your mare. gual the line of contestants | She's too highbred for a rocky road | forged ahead. d plunged forward into the like this. But you might take off her shoes and travel light, the way I've

The pony was now ambling down

Hardy perceived in a flash why he notices required in the posting of a of the gulley, those who had gone be- had seen neither the girl nor her fathrough it, and grasped the fact that mining claim, and paid three or four fore him were all quite a distance ther at the agency. Swiftly he wheeled it purported to convey to him a full of the older prospectors to check them shead, with Vandervyn still in the about to mount. Startled by the quick half-interest in the mine. He had for errors, To all who inquired, he lead. Midway between the mouth of action, Vandervyn spurred his pony, started to read it over more carefully described the trail by which he had the valley and the agency, the long- and went down the steep descent at a The younger man pointed along the that led to the nearest of the four their whirlwind start. Others were lowed at a walk. The opposite rise was gradual. He let the mare take it at a slow trot. At the top was a fair-Hardy walked the mare up the slope ly level stretch of trail. Vandervyn was far ahead. Hardy put the mare ing pinto that Vandervyn spurred his

A steep ridge made a break in the game. The pinto crossed it at a jog over ground that held the mare to a walk, and canter where she could no more than trot. On such a trail he was fully equal to traveling at these paces for twelve hours at a stretch, all the time in the lead of the mare. Of this Hardy was as well aware as was Vandervyn.

Though he steadily lost ground, he kept on in pursuit, coolly studying the landmarks ahead and "lifting" his mare along over the heartbreaking trail. To have given way to the impatience that betrayed itself in his flashing eyes would inevitably have lost him the race by overstraining the mare. He held himself grimly in hand, and eased the going for his eager mount with consummate horseman-

When they reached better ground, Vandervyn was again far ahead. But Hardy had his reward for his restraint she swung into a full gallop. Up and down the long, easy slopes, around a curving mountainside, and along the level bench of a stream bank, she held to the cross-country racing pace that rapidly rolled up mile after mile of

In less than half an hour she vation," explained their spokesman. self in his stirrups, and began to ride brought her rider around a sharp several moments, however, before he bend only a few hundred vards behind the pinto. Vandervyn, over-confident, was jogging along the level when the sound of the approaching hoofbeats threw him into a half-panic. There was still a long stretch of easy trail ahead. He put his pony into a gallop, The long-legged thoroughbred, still running as smoothly as clockwork, continued to gain. Vandervyn began to swing his spurs.

> The pinto started to pull ahead. Hardy held the mare to the same speed as before. It was a speed that he knew she could maintain for miles. He could see that the pinto was being forced to a killing pace-a pace that must strain if not break him before they came to the next rough ground.

> now barely holding his own. The cruel spurring and whip-slashing could not sting the failing beast to greater exertions. He was blowing hard; his rough coat was lathered with sweat. He began to lose.

> At last the trail made a sharp turn, and started to zigzag up the mountainside. The pinto was staggering when he reached the foot of the ascent. The quicker and longer stride of the mare soon brought them up at Vandervyn's heels. The pitch of the mountain was too precipitous for Hardy to risk passing on the lower side of the narrow trail with the mare, and Vandervyn kept the pinto close to the upper side.

trail," said Hardy. "Allow me to

Vandervyn looked over his shoulder with an insolent sneer. "Go on and

Hardy did not reply nor did he attempt to force a passage. At last, twelve miles from the goal of the heartbreaking race, came the opportuultance, rode down to him, his right nity for which he had been waiting. The trail smoothed out in another easy stretch. For this he had been holding the mare in hand. He started his hat to Marie. Then he caught sight at a canter, and gradually let her only at the pinto. There was no sign strike into her long, swift gallop. Vanof sweat lather on his rough coat, no dervyn saw them coming, and at once put the curb on his pony, and sprang put spurs to his luckless pony. As off beside Dupont and the girl, his face before, Hardy held the mare down to frightful with rage. her best long-distance speed. The mare came up alongside the pinto and

Hardy eyed Vandervyn with utmost wariness. And, as before, at the head of the canyon of Sloux creek, Vander- last stake." vyn turned in the saddle, and looked were no further objections raised, away at a gallop. Some wheeled up ered with a coating of clay mire from pony to a walk the moment Hardy

"Great horse, my little old plato, minorion "le wee examining his rifle ing his rifle,

flashed. He thrust the rifle back into calm and stern. its sheath, and drew the mare down

Behind him he heard a muffled drumming of unshod hoofs. Vandervyn was coming up at a gallop.

When the mocking trickster came up behind Hardy, he reined in to a jog trot, and, as before, rode past him with his hand or his hip.

He was taller and leaser, and one of was in a murderous fury. his feet was white. Bu, Hardy appeared to be too dejected to heed the lead, Vandervyn smiled, and looked back at his rival with all the old man," he bantered. "Sorry I can't stay to keep you company. The lady is waiting-and the mine. It may also please you to hear that I have a duly signed and witnessed contract with the tribe, giving me a fee of 20 per payment to the tribe for their mineral lands. Let's hear you congratulate me. Show you're game!" But Hardy did not raise his eyes,

As soon as Vandervyn was out of sight around the castellated rocks at the top of the ridge, Hardy stopped the mare and dropped from the saddle. His shapely mouth was curved in a resolute smile, and his hand was rapidly transferring from the saddlebags to his pockets a pocket ax, a handful of pistol cartridges and the legal notices for posting a mining claim.

He glanced up the slope, and, seeing no sign of Vandervyn, stripped off the mare's bridle, sponged out her nostrils and mouth with the last water in his canteen.

Hardy took the steep slope at an unhurried pace. He reached the place where he had found the bloody trail of Redbear. Up the cleft the climbing was not stiff. He came out on the valley slope, extremely hot and dry but not out of breath. Drawing an airline across to the opposite mountainside, where he had seen the light of Ti-owa-konza's campfire through the darkness, he started down into the valley at a jog as brisk as that of the third pinto. He was almost spent as he tottered through the pines up the last slope. The camp was gone, but he knew the nearest way to the spring.

He rested two or three minutes, repeatedly cooling his head in the spring and rinsing out his mouth, but drinking only a very few sips. Again refreshed, he half filled his canteen, and started on up the easy mountain slope at a steady jog.

Ten minutes brought him over the summit to the sharp pitch above the mine. He stared down at the terrace made out the figures of a man and woman waiting at the first turn of the trail. There could be no doubt that the two were Marie and her fa-

It was no less certain that Vandervyn had not yet arrived. Even had he suspected his opponent's stratagem, he scarcely could have covered the seven miles of trail in as short a time as out his revolver. Hardy leaped upon Hardy had taken to make the three him like a panther, and struck the miles across country. The two watchers never thought to

look about and up the mountain. They later, Vandervyn, though the younger had not yet looked about when he came down upon the crest of the spur. A large, newly cut stake gave him a trigger finger. Hardy stood with the hint where one of the upper corners revolver in his hand. He turned to of the claim should be located. He Marie. cut his own stake, drove it, and tacked on one of his legal notices. Another stake indicated the other upper corner. and he swiftly repeated the making of his own stake and posting of the At the curb of the mine shaft he

posted another notice. He was now in plain view from the cabin, but out of sight of the watchers down on the trail. On the terrace, as he was working the third stake into a bed of loose rocks, he heard an angry exclamation over near the cabin. Dupont and Marie had come around the end of the building, and were staring at him. In a frenzy of disappointed avarice, the trader reached for his revolver. Still more swiftly Marie flung herself upon

"No! no! you shall not!" she cried. 'Leave it to him-he is so near! Let them play out the game!"

Hardy ran across to cut his last stake. Between the ax-blows could be heard the hoofbeats of a galloping horse. He tacked the notice on, chopped a small hole with his ax in the hard soil, and set it up. The mine was his own.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Owner of the Mine.

At that moment Vandervyn loped up over the edge of the terrace, waving of Hardy, over beyond the girl, and the exultant yell died on his lips. He

His voice was high-pitched and light almost airy: "So-he cut across afoot!

He thought to do me!" "Has, you mean!" snarled Dupont. "Got his notices posted. That's his

Vandervyn whirled and snatched his the slope past the mare. Hardy looked full at him with a hateful, mocking rifle from its saddle sheath. Marie Again Vandervyn hodded, and there nies through the water and whirled at the unshed hoofs. They were cov- smile. He pulled in his staggering caught her father's arm to drag him aside; but he was already backing away, his eyes fixed apprehensively ical smile, made their thumb prints, and were at the steep bank. Vanderyyn, wild- beast's shuffling pace did not expose At once Hardy eased down the mare on Hardy. It was time for bullets to duly described in writing by the sec- est and noisiest of all, headed down- the under surface of the hoofs. Wheth- to a trot. Though he saw no third come streaming from the automatic sarily." stream for the road, spurring his er the pony had or had not been re- pinto waiting in the thickets, his eyes pistol. Hardy could have drawn and grew hard and cold with grim deter- opened fire while Vandervyn was free-

when a turn of the truit sundency gave To the astonishment of all three, him his first view of the broken-topped Hardy made no attempt to "get the mountain and the ridge-side where drop" on his opponent. Instead, he Redbear had made the second attempt started to advance upon Vandervyn to assassinate him. As he looked at at a quick, deliberate pace, his hands the shattered summit, his hazel eyes hanging empty at his sides, his face

"Put down that gun!" he command-

Vandervyn was leveling the rifle. Hetook aim straight between Hardy's eyes. His finger kissed the trigger. The slightest twitch would have sent the bullet crashing through Hardy's brain, and the slightest sign of fear or hesitancy on Hardy's part would There were macked differences be- have caused that twitch. He was tween the third pinto and the two first. looking death in the face. Vandervyn

Yet Hardy came on-quick, steady, absolutely calm. His gaze passed fact. As the pinto ambled away in above the deadly muzzle, along the foreshortened barrel, to the narrowlidded, bloodshot eyes of Vandervyn. hate gone from his face. "By-by again, His voice rang out again, clear and sharp with authority:

"Put down that rifle-put it down,

The muscles of Vandervyn's neck twitched. Along the top of the barrel he was glaring back at Hardy-glarcent on all moneys appropriated in ing into those hazel eyes that met his fury with the clear, cool gaze of



The Trader Reached for His Revolver.

absolute courage. The sheer nerve of that steady approach to his rifle muzzle compelled him to pause. It disconcerted him; it struck a chill into the heat of his frenzy.

Still Hardy advanced, swift and steady, his gaze never so much as flickering. Now his eyes and forehead, close beyond the foresight of the rifle, appeared enormously enlarged to Vandervyn's distorted vision. Steadily Hardy put up his hand, took hold of the rifle barrel, and turned the muzzle aside.

"Ah-h-h!" gasped Marie. Hardy drew the rifle out of Vander vyn's relaxing grasp.

"Stand aside, sir!" he quietly commanded. "I wish to speak alone with Miss Dupont.

Vandervyn had parted with his rifle as if dazed. At the sound of Hardy's voice a fresh wave of crimson flooded his face. He stepped back, and jerked weapon aside. The heavy bullet whizzed past Hardy's head. A moment and perhaps the stronger of the two. reeled away, clutching his lacerated

"May I ask for a few words alone with you?"

"No!" Vandervyn hoarsely forbade the girl. "You shall not speak with him. Jake, you're her father-tell her she shall not."

"You know she don't never mind what I say," mumbled Dupont. "Anyway, it sort of looks like Cap is running this here shindy." Hardy had not glanced away from

Marie. Throughout that supreme test of the will power and courage of her two lovers, she had stood tense and silent, as if spellbound. She now looked from one to the other, her face inscrutably calm, her black eyes fath-

"I will hear what Captain Hardy has to say," she said. Hardy motioned her father and Van-

dervyn toward the mine dump. They obeyed. "We are alone," said Marie.

Hardy smiled. "I won the race." "Was it fair, cutting across cour

"Fair? Then you did not know of his scheme." "What scheme? I do not under-

stand." "It does not now matter. I won the race and—the mine."

"Do you expect me to rejoice with you?" asked the girl. "It has cost my father his half of the mine."

"How so? He is not an entryman." "Reggie gave him a deed to a half-"I see," sald Hardy. "Quite in keep-

ing. The deed is absolutely void, and would have been no less so even had the grantor been first to reach here." "You doubt his good faith!" The girl glanced past him toward the sallen figure of Vandervyn on the mine

dump with her father. "So you thought it better to take it all yourself than to let him take it all?"

"Yes," agreed Hardy.

The girl's red lips curved in an iren-"I do not go with the mine-neces-

"No. But the mine necessarily good

with you-now," replied Hardy. (TO BE CONTINUED)



Hardy and he signed the register, and the coulee; a few rode straight across the bottom of the last guich, and the swung into the trail ahead.

and rode away up the coulee. He did | punch.

you

do

the touring car. One of his watch. Another comad with a melodramatic fired.

At last only Vandervyn was ahead.

the mare's sleek neck. Hot as had laxed. Yet his tight lips showed that the trail.

An hour passed. He was already

from that whirlwind heading of the rush as to be able to take this steep pecting to see one of the cowboys. As he went down over a ridge crest, the rider came up the ridge back across the intervening gulch. The man snatched off his broad-brimmed hat to wave a salute. The sun glinted with a

blond head of Vandervyn.

Vandervyn, smiling with insolent exing eyes. There was no hand jauntily poised on his hip, over the hilt of his revolver. His eyes challenged his rival with an audacious, provoking stare. But Hardy looked weariness in his galt. He was fresh-

On up the valley rushed the pursued,

"You have no right to block the

pass, if you're in a hurry. You've got all outdoors to do it in. If there's not room enough, shoot me in the back and take the trail. I'll not get out of it for you."