

HOSTILE VALLEY



CHAPTER XII—Continued
—18—

"Sheriff! I've got a hold of the answer to it now!"

Her tone was ringing; her countenance triumphant.

"Listen here!" she cried. "If Bart had left his gun belt, with the bait can and the gun, there on the ground in all that rain while he fetched Huldy over here, the belt'd be soaked through and wet as a string; and there'd be rust on that gun! But there ain't a speck of rust, and his belt is dry as a bone!"

Saladine had not noticed whether Bart's gun were rusted or not; yet he perceived the justice of this argument, and turned to hear what the sheriff would say. But Bart laughed, and he protested:

"Maybe that belt looked dry to you, Granny, but it's wet enough! I can feel it right through my overalls. And the holster kep' the gun dry." He told Sohier: "I'll show you, when we get over to my place, Sheriff. You can see for yourself."

Sohier accepted this. "All right, ma'am," he shouted to the old woman, over the engine's roar. "I'll look at it, sure!"

And Marm Pierce, after a moment's hesitation, drew back almost reluctantly. She stood there, small and straight in the darkness, as they drove away.

It was no longer raining, although beside the road the leaves were dripping, and the headlights re-



And instantly he seemed to dive straight upward, out of their sight.

vealed black mirrors of muddy water in the ruts. At the turn that led down to Carey's, Saladine swung that way, carefully, since the clay was slippery; and so presently he saw the farm buildings, the pale white blur of the house, and the barn with its high peak black against the gloomy sky.

He turned into the barnyard and stopped by the kitchen door, and switched off the engine. The headlights, fed by the magneto, died as the engine died; and darkness embraced them there.

In the deep silence and the dark, Bart said hospitably:

"You folks go inside and light the lamp. I'll feed the critters and come right in. Won't take me a minute."

He and the sheriff swung to the ground. Bart started toward the barn, but the sheriff, standing here beside the car, called:

"I'll be wanting to look at that belt of yours, Bart!"

"Certain," Bart agreed, without stopping. "I'll be right in!"

"Need a light yourself, won't you?" the sheriff suggested doubtfully; and Bart said:

"There's a lantern in the barn!"

He had not paused; he did not now. The wide barn doors were open, so that there was a gray reek of light against the black bulk of the structure, and Bart's figure, as he moved toward the barn, was in silhouette against this gray.

So they were able to see, though indistinctly, what happened. Bart reached the barn, walking steadily enough; and then suddenly his hands jerked toward his head, and instantly he seemed to dive straight upward, out of their sight.

And at the same time, with a terrific splintering impact and a metallic clank of iron, something fell shattering upon the barn floor. Then silence; and in this silence a rusty, creaking sound.

CHAPTER XIII

For a moment after Bart disappeared in this fashion so mys-

terious, the sheriff's bulky figure was motionless beside the car; but Saladine scrambled to the ground, and tripped on the running board and fell hard on hands and knees, his fingers digging deep into the soft and spongy sod, and there was a wet chill of water on his shins.

He was on his feet, instantly. From the barn came, diminuendo, that rusty, creaking sound.

They went forward at last like wooden soldiers, stiff kneed, on tiptoe, warily; till as they came close to the barn, looking up they saw something dark and bulky swinging a little to and fro above their heads. In the peak of the roof above them there was a projecting beam from which the horse fork was rigged. It was from that beam that this object was suspended. Blurred and foreshortened, it was yet unmistakable; and the sheriff uttered a stammering exclamation, and he went blundering into the barn, groping here and there. He stumbled over something, and Saladine struck a match, and the sheriff demanded hoarsely:

"A knife? Got a knife? Quick!"

As he spoke, he looked up at Saladine and above him. Saladine, very stiffly and warily, turned his head to look that way. Over his shoulder, following the sheriff's eyes, he saw a man sitting cross-legged on a timber, his hands hanging idly over his shins, his eyes bright as a cat's eyes in the dark, and burning strangely. His grinning teeth were white.

It was Zeke Dace, with that big hat, its brim curled so jauntily, pushed far back on his head.

Zeke, above them, said in a drawing tone: "Here's a knife! Help yourself!" And something thumped on the barn floor.

The sheriff found the knife even in the darkness, and twisted open the blade, and Saladine heard steel saw on hemp. Then a pulley whirred, and something fell heavily on the ground outside the barn door.

The sheriff was quick that way. He became busy there, and he said over his shoulder:

"Find the lantern, Jim! One somewhere!"

Zeke spoke calmly. "It hangs right here under me!"

Saladine was a man not easily daunted; but his hands were shaking now. He tried fruitlessly to light the lantern, broke two or three matches in an absurd futility before Zeke dropped from his perch and said:

"Here! Let me!"

And he took the lantern and with steady hand had it lighted instantly.

So they turned to where Bart lay. The sheriff had Bart's wrists in his hands, pushing Bart's arms up and back and down to the ground above Bart's head; then bending the elbows, pressing the folded arms hard home on Bart's chest. He repeated this in a rhythmic persistence.

Zeke said at last, in tones which had a peculiar terror of their own: "I 'low you won't do him any good that way, mister. His neck's broke!" He added contentedly: "Or if it ain't, it ought to be!"

The sheriff relaxed his efforts. "It's all I know to do," he admitted helplessly. He bent forward, examining the dead man. "I guess you're right," he said at last, and stood up slowly. "You must be Zeke Dace they tell about," he reflected.

"That's so," Zeke assented. "That's who I be!"

The sheriff looked down at Bart there on the ground. "You done this to him, did you?"

"Guess I did," Zeke assented; and after a moment, he explained as though proud of his grim device:

"I 'lowed he'd come to tend the critters in the barn here, give him time. So I run a fall through the tackle of the horse fork, and got enough purchase with it to hist the grindstone into the upper mow. I didn't know as it'd be heavy enough; so I fastened some trace chains and such truck onto it. Then I balanced it up there on the edge, so's it'd tip over easy, with one end of the fall fast to it, and a running noose in 't'her end. I fetched the noose end down here and waited; and when Bart come in, all I had to do was drop the noose over his head and twitch the grindstone off its perch."

The sheriff tipped back his hat, ran his fingers across his brow. "Well, we'd ought to get Bart in the house," he decided. "Can't let him lay out here!" And he said to Saladine: "Take his feet, Jim, will you? I'll carry his head."

And he spoke to Zeke in a matter-of-fact tone. "You hold the lantern," he directed. "Open the door for us."

So they carried Bart into the kitchen, and laid him on the floor,

while you and Bart was here!"

Saladine considered, admiring the old woman's thoroughness, yet perceiving an explanation of this matter, too. "Bart must have laid a fake trail," he suggested. "On his way back here from Will's. But you see, Zeke got there before Bart had a chance to do that after Huldy died." He added: "And if Bart told the truth, his rod and all would have been there then; but they wa'n't!"

And he explained: "Zeke went up to the ledge, and found enough to let him make out that Bart and Huldy had had some kind of a scuffle there; so he knowed Huldy had lied about Will; and he raced over to Bart's house, meaning to kill him; but Bart wa'n't there; and Zeke come back here and missed Bart again; and he spent the rest of the day like a dog between rat holes, trying to find Bart and to get at him in some way so Bart couldn't use his gun."

He concluded: "And he finally waylaid him over at the barn! That's all!"

Jenny clung fast to Will's arm; and Marm Pierce exclaimed: "Well, good riddance!" There was never any sentimentality in that stout old woman. "Huldy wa'n't worth it; but I'm right glad to know that Bart got his comeuppance! It was high time."

But Will said: "Pore Zeke. He won't live long in jail!"

"Pore fiddlesticks!" Marm Pierce protested. "I sh'd say you didn't have any call to pity him!"

"I dunno," Will confessed. "I always was kind of sorry for Zeke. And it wa'n't his fault. He tried to hold out against her. But Huldy, I guess she could outnumber most any man."

Saladine felt himself an outsider here. "The sheriff's in a hurry," he remembered. "We're taking Zeke—and Bart too—to town; so I'll be moving on." And turned toward the door. "I'll come see you folks again, sometime," he promised.

"Do so," Marm Pierce assented, and Will seconded the invitation.

So Saladine bade them all goodbye, and went out into the night where the sheriff and Zeke were waiting in the car, and began the long, wearisome drive to town.

He forgot his rod and fish basket; but it would be long before he came to claim them. Zeke Dace, as Will had foreseen, did not live to face trial. He died in late August, in the jail on the hill above East Harbor.

"He wa'n't sick," the sheriff told Saladine, stopping at Jim's farm on the Ridge above Fraternity one day. "He was always kind of thin and shaky, but no worse than always. He just died, that's all!"

They talked together of Zeke for a little; and then Jim asked a word of the other folk in Hostile Valley.

"I was out there last week," the sheriff explained. "To tell 'em about Zeke. Marm Pierce had made it up with her brother, Win's living with her now, and fixing up his side of the house to keep the weather out. He swears he's never going to touch another drop of rum as long as he lives, prob'ly."

Saladine asked for Will and Jenny.

"They're fine," the sheriff assured him. "They're aiming to get married, here in a week or so!"

"Not married yet?" Saladine exclaimed in surprise.

Sohier shook his head. "You'd ought to go out and see 'em," he suggested. "They spoke kindly about you."

"I left my rod out there," Saladine recalled. "Forgot it, that night, and I never did go to fetch it. May-be I will!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Custer Held by Indians Bravest of Hero Band

In the course of the Sioux war of 1876, which originated over the lust for gold in the Dakota country, Gen. George A. Custer came with his regiment upon a full force of Indians camped along a river.

A most courageous youth, Custer ordered his men to strike, and they struck, but the redskins were waiting for them.

Custer and his men were soon surrounded, with no chance for escape and little chance for victory against the savage horde of reds who greatly outnumbered the whites.

In this battle not only the New Rumley (Ohio) boy, but his two brothers, nephew, brother-in-law, and his entire command of nearly 300 mounted officers and men gave up their lives. Not one man was left.

As not one white man was left to tell the story, all is left to conjecture, except what may be gathered from one touching scene. In the midst of a circle of dead bodies lay the corpse of the young hero, with a bullet in his brain and one in his breast, but he was unscathed—the only body untouched by the scalping knife.

This shows that of all that band of heroes who were found lying on the field of battle, brave as they were, Custer may be judged to be the bravest. For so greatly did the redskins regard his valor that they left him untouched. — Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Ancient Tree Pests

Mank fossil trees in the Petrified Forest of Arizona show fine burrows and "tunnels" left by larvae, which seem to have been similar to pests on trees today.



Switchback Railway in the Peruvian Andes.

PERUVIAN VISTAS

Prepared by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.—WNU Service.

FROM the old-fashioned diversions of hanging around cantinas, standing on street corners, or attending bull fights and cock fights, Peruvian men and boys have turned largely to athletics, and association football has become to them what baseball is in our country. The bull ring is still there and cocking mains exist, but they are rapidly losing their appeal.

Lima, the Peruvian capital, is most fortunately located with reference to both winter and summer resorts, whither the people can go quickly whenever climatic conditions tend to become oppressive.

A fifteen-minute motor ride brings one to Miraflores; and the wealth of its flowers and foliage justifies its name. The streets are lined with double rows of trees, and some of them have central parking, while a few ramble about in that charming informality of a fine old English town.

Barranco begins where Miraflores ends, and delightfully straggles along the edge of an uneven cliff about 100 feet above the sea, at the base of which is a fine beach reached by a long, covered ramp and a peculiar elevator not unlike the Lynton-Lymouth lift in north Devon.

Chorrillos joins Barranco as the latter emerges out of Miraflores. Although totally destroyed during the war with Chile, it has been rebuilt and is the meeting place of the wealth and fashion of Peru during the summer season.

Some thirty miles up the Rimac, at an elevation of 2,800 feet, is Chosica, Lima's principal winter resort. When the low, damp, dripping fogs of winter hover over the capital city, the suburban trains are crowded with those who know that, however dismal it may be on the coast, at Chosica the sun is surely shining, for this winter suburb is above the range of the coastal clouds.

Callao is Lima's Port.

Two years after Lima was founded, Callao, its port, began to rise at the mouth of the Rimac. Here were laden the Spanish galleons that carried the wealth of the land back to Spain. Here, too, centered for generations the trade of all South America, for the royal edict was that even the trade of Buenos Aires and Montevideo should clear through Callao. Many were the times that it was pillaged by pirates. And then, on October 28, 1746, came the terrible earthquake which rivaled in destructiveness that at Port Royal, Jamaica, a half century before.

Of the city's 6,000 inhabitants only two remained to tell the story. But, unlike Port Royal, even such a catastrophe could not forever banish it from the map. A bigger and better Callao arose on the ruins of the destroyed city. Today the government is planning to build modern docks and custom house equipment which will make it a port where cargo can be received and discharged with as much facility as shipments are handled in modern North American ports.

Lima is fortunate in its larger environs as in its closer setting. Wherever a stretch of the coastal desert can be provided with water, an agricultural El Dorado takes the place of parched sands; and very few miles both northward and southward, a fine stream sweeps out from the snow-covered summits of the Andes.

Irrigation is therefore a miracle worker ready to transform barren wastes into fertile fields. So the government is irrigating the desert with matches, paradoxical as that may sound.

One of the nation's greatest needs is the establishment of new irrigation projects, through which new areas may be redeemed from the desert. Yet this costs money. The government decided that its smokers should finance these projects, and the Swedish Match company was on hand with an offer of \$8,000,000 a year for the exclusive right to manufacture and sell matches in the republic.

Development of Irrigation.

There are four albums in the offices of one of the larger British houses in Lima which tell an eloquent story of the role of irrigation and of capital in promoting the living standards of the people. They contain pictures illustrating

MEANING OF KIDNAPING

Kidnaping has a broad meaning in criminal law and many who have committed this crime unknowingly have been sent to prison. In most states "intent" is not necessary and secondly, the offense includes "keeping or detaining" anyone against his will. One odd case on record is that of a man who was convicted of kidnaping his wife because he forced her to accompany him on a journey. — Collier's Weekly.

BOYS! GIRLS!

Read the Grape Nuts ad in another column of this paper and learn how to join the Dixie Dean Winners and win valuable free prizes.—Adv.

Might Is Right

Often the man with the might is also in the right. Don't think that arrogant are always in the wrong.



EATS OATMEAL TO HELP KEEP FIT

It may be one of Nature's lowest cost foods, but lucky is the boy or girl who gets it for breakfast every morning.

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