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GENERAL DIRECTORY.

County Officials.

Judges of the Circuit Court—James A. Pearce, Chief Judge; Edwin H Brown and William R Martin, Associates Terms—jury, 1st Monday in April and October; non-jury, 2d Monday in January, 4th Monday in June.

Clerk of the Circuit Court—Thomas L. Day.

County Commissioners—Wesley Jarrell, Pres.; James B. Wright, Franklin P. Medford.

Judges of the Orphans' Court—John F. Dawson, Chief Judge; J. Olan Clark, Wm. H. Deen, Associates.

School Commissioners—Thomas W. Jones, President; Henry C. Fisher and Albert W. Sisk.

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By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

Author of "The Gold Gleaners: A Story of the Cyanide Tanks," "Wilby's Dan," "His Friend the Enemy," "Rogers of Butte," Etc., Etc.

(Copyright, 1903, by William Wallace Cook.)

"Who is the doctor?"

"An eastern man and one of the ganest and best men in the camp. He has implored the mob to let the law take its course, but no one would listen to him. But there's no time for talk. You can drop into the tunnel through this hole I have dug, reach the creek and get to a point below the camp under shelter of the bank. My horse is there, saddled, bridled and ready. Come, you must hurry!"

There was not a little feeling manifested in Darrel's voice as he answered:

"You have done a good deal for me and I appreciate it. You do not think I killed Sturgis?"

"I haven't stopped to think very much about it. It would be no more than a natural supposition after that row in Hawkbill's—that row on my account."

"Well, I'm innocent of murder, but circumstances have got a grip on me and I shall avail myself of the means of escape which you offer. I can't take your horse, though. That would throw suspicion on you."

"How will you get out of the country?"

"With any kind of a start you can trust me for that. Go back through the tunnel, take your horse away and get to your lodging place. I am much obliged to you for the interest you have taken in me. Some time I shall hope to repay you."

"I am already repaid. But I think you should take the horse."

"No."

"You won't be long in coming?"

"Not long."

"Good-by, then, and good luck to you. Your word that you did not kill Sturgis is enough for me."

"Thank you. Good-by and don't forget that promise."

"God knows I have cause to remember it," came back in a husky whisper.

Darrel listened while the young man lowered himself into the tunnel and retreated beyond earshot in the direction of the creek. Then, taking a note book and pencil from his pocket, Darrel wrote a few lines, his pencil point groping over the small page in the dark.

"Mr. Darrel regrets that circumstances over which he has no control compel him to postpone indefinitely his meeting with Mr. Murgatroyd. He begs to assure Mr. Murgatroyd, however, that the meeting is simply deferred and not abandoned."

Tearing out the sheet on which he had penciled this message, Darrel left it on the table.

CHAPTER VI.

DARREL'S FLIGHT.

Old Ab Gryce, under foreman at the War Eagle mine, pulled in his half-broken bronco team at the rear of the Half Way house and rolled off the seat of his mountain wagon.

"When ye take 'em off the pole, Jimmie," said he to the hostler, "don't fool none with the harness. Them bronks kin kick more an' faster than ary other critters in these parts."

Jimmie grunted and measured Gryce sharply with his eyes.

"Now," continued the old man, "don't turn your lamps on me like that. Meby I did look through the bottoms of a few glasses before shackin' out of Anaconda, but it wasn't enough to affect my jedgement. Dynamite, thar on the off side, is the original inventor of the bed-post buck, an' he kin be plum scand'lous when he takes a notion. As fer Terror, the nigh hoss, many a time he's kinked himself inter a bow knot an' laid out three punchers in the untanglin'. So ef ye—"

Gryce was interrupted by one of the cattlemen grouped in front of the hotel, waiting for the Chinese cook to sound the dinner gong. The under foreman was well known and, in spite of his many infirmities, universally liked. By way of greeting, the cattleman pleasantly drew a revolver and cut the air with a bullet not half a dozen feet from the old man's ear.

With a zipping hiss the missile fanned away into the void directly over the rear of the mountain wagon, so close to a pile of cases roped to the wagon box that Gryce gave vent to a terrified yell.

"Howdy, Uncle Ab?" called the cattleman. "The sing of a bullet has a mighty queer effect on ye, seems like."

"You, Ben," shouted Gryce, "you stop that. If the p'int of that gun had been an inch lower the hull passel of us would have been wiped off the map." The old man drew a sleeve across his forehead. "Glory, man! I'm freightin' 500 o' high explosive, along with caps an' fuse, ter the War Eagle."

The laughing crowd was instantly sobered.

"If the bronks are all you say, Uncle Ab," said Jimmie, "they're altogether too frisky for a load like that."

"I'm less afeared o' the team than I am of some playful fool like Ben, thar. Mind what I say about the critters, Jimmie," and Gryce reached the front of the tavern just as the gong sounded. "Howdy, boys?" he asked, taking in his friends with a comprehensive look. "How's things at Sandy Bar, Cliff?"

"Couldn't be worse," answered Cliff, gloomily. "Jack Sturgis got his ticket across the divide last night."

"Buy it himself?"

"Not much! A gambler from Frisco handed it out; a 45, and poor old Jack never knew what struck him."

Gryce swore softly. "Took care o' the gambler, didn't ye?" he asked, significantly.

"Intended to, much as could be," answered Cliff, "but while we were taking care of the marshal so he couldn't interfere and making our plans the gambler got away."

"Did he have help?"

"It's the general verdict that he did it himself; pulled up a board in the floor and dug down [illegible] to a drift that led out on the creek bank."

"That's plagued rough," muttered Gryce. "You'll get 'im, though, won't ye?"

"I, we can. Several parties are out combing the hills and I'm expecting some fellows this way before long. Murgatroyd has offered $1,000 to the man who brings Darrel in."

"Darrel! I've heard o' him, but he's somethin' of a stranger on this part o' the range. Come in to the bar, Cliff, an' we'll crook elbows to your success in baggin' Darrel. Can't eat, anyhow, till I put an edge on my appetite. Any the rest o' you care ter j'ine us?"

The invitation was eagerly accepted. During the meal that followed Cliff aired the whole matter connected with the killing of Sturgis in detail.

His recital was punctuated with angry comments on the part of the listeners. Sturgis was known to be a gambler and a hard citizen, but the manner of his taking off, together with the escape of Darrel, appealed strongly to the latent sympathies of the rough and ready frontiersmen.

After the meal Gryce invited his friends into the other part of the tavern once more and drank so many glasses to the success of the Sandy Bar men that it was necessary to help him out and boost him to his seat on the mountain wagon.

With a wild whoop he rolled out of sight along the cross trail that led toward the War Eagle. Dynamite and Terror on the keen jump.

"Shouldn't wonder if Uncle Ab set off that load o' his," remarked Ben Chickworthy, his eyes following the vanishing cloud of dust. "It was criminal carelessness fer the super at the War Eagle ter send such a man after blastin' material."

Another cloud of dust had appeared along the south trail and presently a dozen mounted men broke out of it, plying their lathered mounts with quirt and spur. It was the Sandy Bar contingent and they reined in their horses at the door of the tavern.

"We're hot after the fellow," said one of the pursuers in response to a question from Cliff. "He's been seen twice; once by Kasper, between here and the Bar, and later by Neb Hawley, a mill-hand at the Eagle. When Hawley seen him he was footing it west along the Eagle trail. We'll overhaul him, Cliff. Get your horse if you want to be in at the finish."

Cliff hurried to get his mount under saddle and take his place in the ranks of the pursuers. The horsemen thereupon darted away at the same stirring pace.

Meanwhile the under foreman had been trying clumsily to get his flying team under control. Gryce was not so far gone in drink that he failed to estimate the dangers of such a killing pace with such a load, but his awkward work with the reins would have proved unsuccessful had not a man stepped into the road in front of the horses.

A thick tangle of brush bordered the trail and the appearance of the man was as surprising and unexpected to the bronchos as it was to Gryce. The team halted abruptly, thrown far back in the harness.

The under foreman got a fresh grip on the lines and brought up the bronchos well in hand.

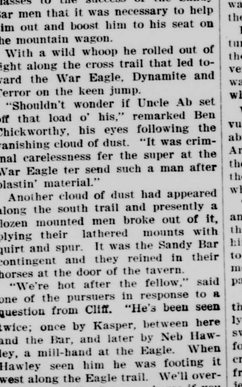
"Good afternoon," said the stranger, courteously.

"Howdy," said Gryce.

The stranger wore clothes of good quality, but they showed evidence of recent hard usage. He was on foot, also, and a vague suspicion worked sluggishly into Gryce's brain.

"Have you come from the Half Way house?" queried the stranger.

"That's me," hiccoughed Uncle Ab, wondering how he could go to work and capture the man. Handicapped with a fractious team and 500 pounds of freight that was still more unreliable, as well as possessing a heart that was far from well balanced, the



WHEN HE STAGGERED TO HIS FEET AND LOOKED BACK THE MOUNTAIN WAGON HAD DISAPPEARED, AS IF BY MAGIC.

old man yet thought it possible that he might be able to do something.

"Have you seen anything of a smooth-faced man in corduroys?" was the stranger's next question.

Uncle Ab pricked up his ears. Possibly he was mistaken in the smooth-voiced stranger, after all.

"Ridin' a calico cayuse?" demanded the under foreman.

"Yes," replied the other, with brightening eye.

"Thunder! So that's the yap that's wanted over Sandy Bar way. I seen him, sure; and he was lopin' off this piece of War Eagle trail about three this mornin', when I was pikin' fer Anaconda ter git this load o' high explosive. An' ter think that I was as close ter him as me an' you is, an' didn't know he was wanted an' never raised a hand. Shucks!"

Uncle Ab was morbidly disappointed.

"Which way was he going?" asked the stranger.

"West," was the answer. "Say, friend, jump up here with me an' I'll take ye along as fur as the Eagle, anyhow."

The stranger thanked Gryce for his offer and climbed up on the seat. At a word from the driver the bronchos plunged away at their usual breakneck speed.

The War Eagle trail, west of the Half Way house, threaded a very rough section of country. With a clear head, firm nerves and steady drivers the way was sufficiently dangerous, but with Gryce in his half-tipsy condition, the bronchos charging pell-mell and the boxes of giant powder leaping around in the rear of the wagon, the risk might have been denominated extra-hazardous.

"Whoa, consarn ye!" yelled Gryce, sawing at the reins. "Dynamite, ye're the wust infernal trouble-maker ever hitched ter a pole! An' ye're sawed off'n the same piece, Terror. Drat 'em! They'll have us sky-rocketin' before we know what's struck us."

A lurch of the mountain wagon all but hurled Gryce from his seat. The lines slackened and would have dropped had the stranger not grabbed them as they rippled over the dashboard.

"Bear down on 'em, friend!" shouted the old man, making frantic attempts to keep himself in the wagon. "They've taken the bits in their teeth an' we'll go up like a couple o' shootin' stars if ye can't hold 'em in."

A chatter of galloping hoofs could be heard behind, broken now and again by a distant shout. The stranger threw a look over his shoulders and, instead of holding the horses in, leaned forward with loosened reins and urged them on.

Directly ahead the trail made a sharp turn around a shoulder of rock. At the present rate of speed it looked very much as though the careening wagon would be thrown from its wheels in taking the bend.

With grinding teeth and hands convulsively gripping the seat, Uncle Ab abandoned himself to wild profanity. Around the curve raced the bronchos, the inner wheels of the wagon scraping the rocks and the outer wheels whirring in the air.

The seat was lifted from the wagon and cast to the outer side of the trail, the old man going with it. Darrel saved himself for a few moments by dropping to his knees and, with a quick movement, winding the lines across his palms.

Then 200 feet from the spot where the under foreman had fallen and was lying unconscious, the bronchos swerved slightly. In a moment the forward wheels struck a bowlder, a crash followed, the team broke away from the wagon and the stranger was jerked over the dashboard and hauled a hundred yards along the rough trail before he could disentangle his hands from the reins.

As he lay, bruised and dazed, in the roadway, the frenzied team vanished in the distance, a roar as from a hundred cannons came from behind him. The very hills seemed shaken to their foundations, a lurid glare flashed skyward and the sun was darkened with a cloud of rocks, dust and debris.

CHAPTER VII.

DARREL FINDS THE MAN IN CORDUROYS.

Darrel's senses had not been taken away by the fall from the wagon or the dragging along the trail, but for a moment after the explosion his consciousness left him. When he staggered to his feet and looked back, the mountain wagon had disappeared as if by magic, not a splinter of wood or piece of twisted iron being left.

A huge hole had been scooped out of the trail and great bowlders had been riven and tossed about in every direction. Beyond the ragged pit lay the form of Gryce, close to the seat of the wagon.

The old man lay still and silent and, after a few moments spent in collecting his scattered wits, Darrel started towards him. He had not gone far, however, when he heard the hoof falls of horses and instantly remembered the party of mounted men which had alarmed him a short time before.

Turning sharply to the right, Darrel plunged into the undergrowth that bordered the trail. Ascending the steep slope of a hill for a dozen yards, he halted in a thicket and crouched there with his eyes on the road below.

Gryce was sitting up on the ground, rubbing his forehead in a confused way and peering around. The men of Sandy Bar, riding around the spur, came suddenly upon him.

Darrel watched and listened intently. What would be the next move of his enemies? he was asking himself.

The horseman gazed about them in astonishment. Cliff dismounted and walked to where the old man was sitting.

"Did the giant powder let go, Gryce?" he asked.

"I'm jest tryin' to figger out what happened," replied the under foreman. "I seem to be all here, but, my! wasn't it awful? I got the roar in my ears yet."

"How does it come you're settin' there with the seat of the wagon?" asked another of the Sandy Bar men.

"Got throwed out o' the wagon," said Gryce, "an' it's the best thing that ever happened ter me. S'posin' I'd been in the old trap along with that other feller? I'd be where he is now, an' that's tellin'."

"That other fellow went up with the wagon, did he?" inquired Cliff.

"Sure. He was hangin' to the lines when I shot out o' the wagonbox with the seat. He stayed with the wagon and the high explosive, all right, an' I reckon he's still with 'em. Got blowed ter atoms, that's what he did."

The Sandy Bar men exchanged glances, then swerved their eyes to take in the havoc wrought by the explosion.

"Don't ye know, Uncle Ab, that was the chap that killed Sturgis and gave us the slip at the Bar, last night?"

"Ye don't mean it!"

"It's the truth," returned Cliff. "We saw you just before you took that turn in the trail and we knew the man in a minute."

"Then," returned Gryce, after a period of reflection, "that's why he let the bronks out inst'id o' pullin' 'em in after he looked back an' saw you comin'." He got up painfully. "Well," he added, "it's all right; five hundred pounds o' high explosive is as good as a tree and a rope, only mebby not so satisfyin'. Wonder how I'm goin' ter set myself right with the super, at the War Eagle?"

The Sandy Bar men were not concerned with Uncle Ab's troubles and dismounted to make a more thorough examination of the surroundings. From the thicket above, Darrel watched them moving here and there searching for any gruesome relics that might have been left.

All that was found was the crown of a derby hat deep in a clump of torn and twisted hazels.

"It's Darrel's," said Cliff, walking towards his companions and holding the object up for inspection. "There is no doubt about it, boys. Fate has taken this matter in hand and avenged the murder of Sturgis. Darrel is dead."

"It would be a heap more satisfyin' if we could find some remains ter prove it," averred one of the men. "Would it be possible for a man to be blown off the face of the earth like that?"

"Why not," rejoined Cliff, impatiently. "If the wagon and its load were blown to atoms, the same fate must have happened to Darrel."

"Let's have a look around before we settle on that," answered the doubter. "It seems as though we ought to find somethin'."

Like a wraith Darrel turned and glided away. A grim humor filled him.

"They believe I'm dead," he thought. "Let them think so; it's the safest way out of this trouble, for me."

He was bruised in body and limb, but life was at stake and he counted his small injuries as nothing. Through the hills that bordered the trail he took his course, keeping steadily westward.

At last, completely fagged, he dropped down on a rock to rest. He had not had a mouthful of food since escaping from Sandy Bar and the exertions called forth by his flight had left him weak and nerveless.

What was he to do now? he interrogated himself? To don a disguise and get out of the country would be comparatively easy, but he had no desire to get out of the country.

There was still that unsettled score with Murgatroyd. He was doggedly determined that nothing should come between him and that.

But that must be secondary, now. His first work, if he could devise a way, must be to prove his innocence of the murder of Sturgis.

In his secret heart he had persuaded himself that Murgatroyd had slain Sturgis, and with the deliberate intention of involving him—Darrel. It was a fearful suspicion to hold against a man, but none knew Murgatroyd's secretiveness, cunning and desperate methods better than Darrel.

Now, if ever, was Darrel's time to take his fate in his hands and make of it what he would. The very audacity of the measure appealed to the fugitive.

As he sat there and rested a puzzling thought came to him. It had to do with the explosion of the giant powder.

Just what had set off the explosive? It could not have been the shock caused by the collision of the front wheels of the wagon with the boulder, for the effect would then have been instantaneous.

The bronchos had dragged him by the bits out of harm's way between the moment of the collision and the moment of the explosion. The time required had been brief indeed, yet long enough to convince him that something aside from the wrecking of the wagon had set off the powder.

It was not until some time afterward that he learned the truth. Gryce was hauling to the mine giant powder that had long been in storage—so long that it had become crystalized. And every miner knows how "freaky" crystalized giant powder is. It will sullenly submit to the roughest handling or will incontinently explode for the slightest of reasons, or for no reason at all.

The sun was low when Darrel got up and staggered on. He must have food and had hopes that he could secure it in some covert way at the War Eagle mine.

Still pushing from covert to covert through the rough country that paralleled the trail, he kept persistently westward. The sun went down and darkness began to fall but, although his head swam for weariness and his limbs almost refused to support him, the fugitive continued to struggle on.

Just as he felt that he must sink to the ground and lie there for the rest of the night, the whinnying of a horse reached his ears. The sound did not come from the trail, but from some point on his left.

Turning in that direction he made his way painfully through a small coulee whose steep banks flung a heavy shadow about him. The passage was short and he came out abruptly into a cleared space lying full in the moonlight.

Before him stood a horse secured by a stake-pin and a length of rope. Be-

continued on 4th page

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