

The Girl a Horse and a Dog

By FRANCIS LYNDE

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(Continued.)

"There ain't no other place they could go and let him get back, as you might say, in the same day."
"Say it all, Daddy," I prompted.
"There ain't much to say. Stannie boy, 'ceptin' what I said afore, that maybe we'd been jumpin' at things sort o' blind-like. Jeannie's got a heap o' sense—if I do say it as shouldn't—and the whole gee-ripittin' thing, as we been puttin' it up, ain't no more like her than winter's like dog-days."
Having run the subject into a corner we were both speechless for a little time and I think it was almost with a sense of relief that we sprang alert when the dog, hitherto sleeping quietly at our feet, jumped up and ran to hold his nose at the threshold of the door opening upon the dump head.

CHAPTER XVI

Burnt Matches.

Following the dog to the door, we could neither see nor hear anything going on outside, though Barney's sniffings under the door and his low growl warned us that something was afoot, either on the dump head or in the partly wrecked cabin beyond. While we were still peeping and peering, each at his auger-hole and each ready to take an offhand shot at anything that seemed suspicious, the silence of the mountain night was ripped and torn by the most hideous clamor imaginable, arising, apparently, in the cabin or perhaps from the groving of trees just behind it. The racket was deafening; comparable to nothing that I'd ever heard; a magnified orchestration, so to speak, of the pandemonium made by a crowd of country boys serenading a newly married pair with tin pans and such-like noise-making implements.

"What in the name o' Job!" stammered Daddy Hiram. "Reckon them gosh-dammed pirates 've gone plum' 'oony?"

"Wait," I qualified, and I had to shout to make myself heard. "There'll be more to follow. This is only the curtain-raiser."

But my guess appeared to be no good. For quite some little time we crouched, guns at the ready, prepared to repel the assault which we naturally supposed would be made under cover of the distracting racket. But there was no assault, though the meaningless clamor kept up without abatement.

By the time we were beginning to grow a trifle hardened to it the clamor stopped as abruptly as it had begun and the silence which succeeded was even more deafening than the noise had been. While I fancied I could see dim figures stealing down the road that led to the bench below, I heard Daddy say: "Now, what in the name o' Jeholachim—"

He had turned away from his peep-hole and I could sense, rather than see, that he was rubbing his eyes. Then I realized that upon me, also, a sudden blindness had fallen; the interior of the shafthouse had become as dark as the inside of a pocket. The effect was so stupefying that it took both of us a minute or so to understand that some change as yet undefinable had been wrought either in us or in our surroundings during the noisy interlude.

"Great Jehu!" exclaimed the old man—though he was within arm's-reach I could make him out only as a dim shadow—"Great Jehu! I—I b'lieve I'm goin' blind, Stannie! I—I can't see nothin' a-tall!"

"Don't worry," I hastened to say; "I'm in the same boat. We've been looking too long and steadily through those auger-holes. It'll pass in a minute."

But it didn't pass and presently the voice of my old side partner came again out of the darkness.

"F'raps it's cloudin' up some," he suggested in a half-whisper. "I can't see no stars through them windows."

At this I looked toward the window openings, but the interior blackness had blotted them out completely. Almost instinctively I turned back to the door and put an eye to a loophole. One glance was enough. The trouble, whatever it might be, was with us and not with the sky. The stars were shining as brightly as ever.

"Don't move, Daddy," I cautioned, and then groped my way along the wall and climbed to the top of our earth-sacked breastwork at a point which I guessed to be under the nearest of the two windows.

When I drew myself up and tried to thrust a hand through the opening the mysterious darkness was explained. The window embrasures were stopped up, both of them, on the outside by something that felt like a heavy canvas curtain, though how the curtain was held in place I could not determine. But it was firmly braced in some way. With all the purchase I could get—which wasn't much—I couldn't dislodge it or push it aside.

Making my way back to the door

I told Daddy what I had found. "Huh!" he said; "that old tarpaulin that was out yonder in the ore shed. How d'ye reckon they got it there, Stannie?"

"It's hoisted on a framework of some kind, and they did it while we were rubbering and trying to find out what all that noise was about."

We were not kept very long in doubt as to what the next enemy move was to be. With the cessation of the tom-tom clatter the collier had grown curiously restless. We couldn't see him, but we could hear him running from post to pillar, sniffing at the cracks and occasionally giving a whining growl. Presently he began to cough and sneeze; then he came racing back to us, flattening himself to hold his nose to the crack under the door and taking long breaths as if he were half stifled. I stooped to pat him and immediately imagined I was smelling burning sulphur matches.

"Get down here, Daddy, and smell this dog!" I whispered. "Is it old-fashioned matches, or what?"

One sniff was all that the old man needed. "Gosh-to-gee-whiz—brimstone!" he choked; "them devils are smokin' us out! That's why they stopped up them window holes; so we couldn't get any air!"

There appeared to be little enough time for any defensive move. The asphyxiating gas was coming stronger every moment, and any search for its source seemed utterly hopeless. Yet we went at it, coughing and choking, and stumbling over everything in the darkness, as a matter of course.

After all it was Barney who (I honor him with the human pronoun because he certainly deserved it) it was Barney who showed us the devil's doorway. The red glow was now sending enough light through cracks and crevices and the bullet rippings overhead to make our inner darkness a degree or so less than Stygian. Missing the dog for a moment at our common breathing hole, we saw him circling a particular spot in the floor and snarling at it as if it were something alive.

At that we both remembered that the shafthouse floor was raised a foot or so from the rocky ledge on the down-mountain side, and that the space underneath was partly open. Daddy pointed to the circling dog.

"Barney's got it!" he panted. "They've run their chimney up under the floor!" Then: "Where in Sam Hill did you leave that ax?"

The ax was near at hand and I ran for it. Holding my breath I began to chop madly at the floor planking. By this time the air was so bad that it



Daddy Took His Cue Instantly.

was impossible to breathe it, and after a few blows I had to drop the ax and run to the breathing gap. Daddy took his cue instantly, snatching up the ax as I lunged it down and hacking away as fast as he could hold his breath. When he was forced to make a bolt for the life-saving hole in the door, I ran in again; thus got a couple of the floor planks loose and pried them out.

In the space beneath the open-cracked floor we found Bullerton's chimney end; an old discarded boiler flue, it seemed to be, leading up from the bench below. From unearthing the deadly thing to muzzling it with one of our wet blankets was the breathless work of only a minute or two; and with the gas-main thus shut off, the air in the shafthouse soon became bearable again, the hole we had chopped through the floor serving as a ventilator through which the cool, crisp night air came rushing in a revivifying blast.

Our first care, after a prolonged silence led us to believe that the raiders had withdrawn to study up some fresh scheme for getting rid of us, was to get a bar and pry our two doors open so that the breeze might blow through and air the place out a bit.

Closing and barring the doors after the sulphur stench had been reduced to a mere match-box odor, we established our night-watch, Daddy Hiram taking the first trick under a solemn promise to call me at the end of a couple of hours. This time he behaved better, rousing me a little before midnight. He reported everything quiet, and pointed to the sleeping dog as evidence that there were no intruders within smelling distance.

"Been that-away ever since you turned in," he said, meaning, as I took it, that the dog had been resting easy.

"You can just keep an eye on Ba-

If anything goes to stirrin', he'll know it afore you will."

Nothing did stir; and after Daddy had gone to wrap himself in his damp blankets, I had my work cut out for me keeping awake; in fact, I shouldn't want to swear that I was fully awake during all of the one hundred and twenty minutes that my sentry-go lasted. No matter about that. Bullerton didn't spring any more surprises on us during my watch; and when I turned the fortress over to Daddy at two o'clock I was able to pass the "all quiet" report back to him and go to the blankets with an easy conscience.

I had just dropped asleep, as it seemed to me—though in reality I had slept like a log for more than two hours—when Daddy Hiram came to shake me awake.

"Somethin' dom'," he announced quietly, and when I sat up I saw that the collier was moving uneasily from one door to the other, stopping now and then to stand motionless with his ears cocked and his head on one side: "Barney hears something," I ventured; and a moment later Daddy broke in:

"Huh! It's plain enough for my old ears, now; it's a wagon comin' across the bench."

Now the presence of a wagon on our bench at this early hour in the morning might mean either one of two diametrically opposite things: Our deliverance; or the upcoming of reinforcements for the raiders. We were not left long in doubt. Shortly after the rack-rack of the wagon wheels stopped we heard footsteps, and the hair stiffened on Barney's back. Next we heard Bullerton's voice, just outside and apparently under our window openings.

"Broughton!" the voice called; "can you hear me?"

"So well that you'd better keep out of range!" I snapped back.

"All right—listen. You've got to get out, Broughton—that's flat. I haven't wanted to go to extremes. For perfectly obvious and commonplace reasons I don't want to have to kill you to get rid of you. But we are not going to gentle you any more. You've already hurt four of my men, and two of the four are crippled. The next time we hit you, it'll be for a finish."

"Yes," said I. "You brought the new club up in a wagon, didn't you?"

He ignored this.

"We could starve you out if we chose to take the time. I know pretty well what you've got to eat—or rather what you haven't got. It's your privilege to take your life in your own hands, Broughton; that's up to you. But how about the old man?"

"The old man's a plenty good and able to speak for himself!" yapped Daddy. "You do your durndest, Charley Bullerton!"

"All right, once more. You'll hear from us directly, now; and as I said before, we've quit gentling you. That's my last word."

For a time after this the silence, and the darkness, since it was the hour before dawn, were thick enough to be cut with an ax. But the dog was more restless than ever, and we knew that something we could neither see nor hear must be going on. After a while I asked the question that had been worrying me ever since I had heard the wagon wheels.

"What did they bring up in that wagon, Daddy—a Gatling?"

"The Lord only knows, Stannie—and he won't tell," was the old prospector's reply, made with no touch of irreverence; and the words were scarcely out of his mouth before a thunderbolt struck the shafthouse.

CHAPTER XVII

Tit for Tat.

That word "thunderbolt" is hardly a figure of speech. The thing that hit us couldn't be compared to anything milder than thunder and lightning. There was a flash, a rending, ripping roar as if the solid earth were splitting in two, and the air was filled with flying fragments and splinters. Air, I say, but the acrid, choking gas which filled the shafthouse could scarcely be called air.

"Dynamite—that's what they fetched in that wagon!" gurgled the old man at my side, and I could have shouted for joy at the mere sound of his voice, since it was an assurance that he hadn't been killed outright.

"It's only a question of a little time, now, Daddy," I prophesied. "What you said yesterday—that Bullerton would try to get possession without destroying the property—no longer holds good. He has evidently decided that we've got to be ousted, even at the expense of building a new shafthouse and installing new machinery. Why has he changed his mind, when he knows that he could starve us out in a few days?"

"I been thinkin' about that, right p'intedly, Stannie. Shouldn't wonder if somethin' in the wind—somethin' we don't know about."

"Then there's another thing," I put in. "Supposing, just for the sake of argument, that our first guess was right; that he did take Jeannie to

Angels three days ago and that they were married there. You know your daughter, Daddy, and I know her, a little. Nobody but an idiot would suppose that she'd live with Bullerton as his wife for a single minute if he makes himself your murderer."

"It sure does look that-away to a man up a tree," admitted the stout old fighter.

"I'm hanging on to the little hole like a dog to a root, Daddy," I confessed. "If I can only keep on believing that they're not married, I can put up a better fight, or be snuffed out—if I have to be—with a good few less heart-burnings."

But at this the old man, who, no

longer ago than the yesterday, had seemed to lean definitely toward the no-marriage hypothesis, suddenly changed front.

"Don't you go to bankin' on anything like that, Stannie, son," he said in a tone of deep discouragement. "Charley Bullerton's a liar, from the place where they make liars for a livin', and 'tain't goin' to be no trick a-tall for him to make Jeannie, and a lot o' other folks, b'lieve that we blowed ourselves up with our own dynamite. No, sir; don't you go to bankin' on that."

"Then you do believe that Jeannie went with Bullerton?"

"Looks like there ain't nothing else left to believe," he asserted dolefully. "Look at it for yourself, son: she's been gone three whole days. If she hadn't gone with him—and the good Lord only knows where she could have gone—don't you reckon she'd 've been back here long afore this? No, Stannie; we been lettin' 'em do it. I reckon we just got to grit our teeth, son, and tough it out the best we can."

During this waiting interval, which seemed like hours and was probably only a few minutes, we were momentarily expecting another crash. It did not come; but in due course of time we heard a stir outside and then voices, and one of the voices, which was not Bullerton's said: "I'll bet that ca'tridge smoked 'em out good an' plenty, cap'n. Gimme th' ax, Tom, till we bust open the door an' have a squint at 'em."

Just at that moment a submerging wave of depression surged over me and shoved me down so deep that I think possibly if Bullerton had called out and demanded our surrender I should have been tempted to tell him that I was not so much of a hog as not to know when I had enough. But the old man squeezed in beside me under the arched boiler plate was made of better fiber; he was game to the last hair in his beard. With a wild-Indian yell, he hunched his Winchester into position and fired once, twice, thrice, at the door, as rapidly as he could pump the reloading lever.

A spattering fusillade was the reply to this, but the aim was bad and the only result was to set the air of our prison fortress to buzzing as if a swarm of angry bees had been turned loose on us. After this, the raiders withdrew, so we judged; at all events, the silence of the dark hour before daybreak shut down upon us again, and once more we had space in which to "gather our minds," as Daddy put it.

It may be a dastardly confession of weakness to admit it, but I am free to say that the prolonged struggle was gradually undermining my nerve. If Bullerton had made up his mind to write off the loss of the mine buildings and machinery, it was a battle lost for us. It could be only a question of a little time, and enough daylight to enable the bombers to throw straight, until we should be buried in the wreck of the shafthouse and hoist—and without the privilege of dying in a good, old-fashioned, stand-up fight.

All of this I hastily pointed out to Daddy Hiram, adding that, for Jeannie's sake, if for no better reason, he ought to take his chance of staying upon earth. As long as I live I shall always have a high respect for the wrath of a mild-mannered man. The old prospector was fairly Berserk, mad, foaming at the mouth, and short of dragging him out by main strength there was no way of making him let go.

"No, sir; I done promised your gran'paw 't I'd stand by for him, and he paid me money for doin' it. When them hellions get this here mine, they're goin' to dig a hole somewhere and bury me afterward," was all I could get out of him.

We were not given very much more time for discussion, or for anything else. The first faint gray dawn was coming, and with the partial lightning of the inner gloom, we craned our necks—like a double-headed turtle peering out of its shell—and got a glimpse of the damage done by the infernal thunderbolt. We saw it without any trouble: a great hole torn in the sheetrock roof directly over the hoist and shaft mouth. Knowing the use and effect of explosives pretty well, Daddy said that the bomb had gone off prematurely; had exploded before it had fairly lighted upon the roof.

"If it hadn't—if it had been layin' on the roof when it went off—we wouldn't be lookin' up at that hole right now, Stannie, my son. We'd be muggin' in the golden stair and a wonderin' how much farther it was to the New Jerusalem, and what kind o' harps they was goin' to give us when we got there. We sure would."

We didn't keep our heads out very long. While we were staring up at the hole and at the patch of sky beyond it, a small dark object with a smoke-blue comet's tail trailing behind it crossed our line of sight, and we ducked and held our breath—or at east, I held mine. The crash came almost immediately, and it was followed in swift succession by a second and a third. Luckily, none of the three hit the shaft-house, nor, indeed, fell very near to it; and this uncertainty of aim told us where the attack was coming from. The bomb throwers were posted somewhere on the steep slope of the mountain above us; the slope which I have described as running up from the brink of the abrupt cliff overlooking the mine plant.

"They'll get the range, after a while," Daddy grunted. "And when they do, I reckon it'll be good-by, fair world, for a couple of us and one mighty good dog. I'm a-tellin' you, Stannie, son, the shot that comes down through that hole fixes us a-

plenty. Sufferin' Methusalem! what-



The Crash Came Almost Immediately.

all is the folks down yonder at 'Tropia a-dreamin' about, to let all this bangin' and whangin' go on up here without comin' up to find out what's makin' it?"

The Atropia that I remembered so nearly moribund that I didn't wonder it wasn't making any stir in our behalf; so, when a few pattering rifle shots which seemed to originate on the great bench below began to sift in among the bomb echoes, I took it that Bullerton had divided his force and was trying to rattle us two ways at once. As for that, however, the bigger bombardment kept us from speculating very curiously upon any thing else. Two more of the giant crackers had fallen to the right of us, one of them into the wreck of the blacksmith shop, to send up a spout of iron and scrap which fell a second or so later in a thunderous rain; and then.

(Continued next week.)

MANY MILLIONS SPENT ON TOYS.

Over a hundred million dollars was expended for toys by the people of the United States even in the year of economic depression, 1921. The factory valuations of toys manufactured in the United States, says the Trade Record of the National City Bank of New York, more than trebled when the war cut us off from the former chief source of our toy imports, Germany, and the value of the "toys and games" turned out by our factories in 1919, the latest census year, is officially stated at \$46,000,000 against \$14,000,000 in the preceding census year 1914. Meanwhile the imports of toys which fell from \$8,000,000 in the year prior to the war to a little more than \$1,000,000 in the year of its close, quickly advanced to \$6,000,000 in 1920, and \$10,000,000 in 1921, so that the imports of toys in the fiscal year 1921 were actually greater in value than in any year preceding the war.

While this unexpectedly prompt inflow of toys from foreign countries has somewhat reduced the out-turn of the toy factories of the United States in the current year, the fact that the capital engaged in the industry advanced from over \$10,000,000 in 1914 to probably \$25,000,000 in 1919 in which year the number of employees exceeded 10,000, suggests that the out-turn of our own factories in 1920-21, plus that of the doll factories which are not included in the group entitled "toys and games," plus the importation in 1921 of \$10,000,000 worth of dolls and toys from abroad, with an aggregate factory valuation of considerably over \$50,000,000, must have cost the "ultimate purchaser" fully \$100,000,000 in 1921, despite the tendency toward economies which has characterized trade conditions during the year.

In one particular line of the toy industry and trade, the holiday season finds a distinct shortage, namely that of dolls. The number of doll factories in the United States greatly increased following the opening of the war, upon the assumption that the abundance of the supply formerly drawn from Germany would greatly intensify the demands of the home market but with the close of the war and the prospect of big imports from Germany and other countries of Europe as well as from Japan, which had developed a considerable toy trade during the war, many of the doll factories in the United States closed down, while the expected increase in importation of dolls did not materialize as rapidly as had been anticipated, and as a consequence the holiday trade found an extreme shortage in this particular class of goods, developing an actual "famine" in dolls despite the fact that the children of the United States are "crying for them."

The happenings of the war period above referred to, the shortage in toy supplies turned out in Europe and the big increase in those from our own factories, has resulted in a large growth in our toy exports meantime, which advanced from three-quarters of a million dollars in the year immediately preceding the war to over \$4,000,000 in the calendar year 1920, and today the children of over fifty countries and colonies of the world are hugging American dolls, while the export of other classes of American toys in 1920 were distributed to nearly one hundred countries and colonies as against approximately half that number in the year preceding the war.—Ex.

The goal we all seek in this world is success. It is not handed to us on a silver platter—we must work to attain it.

ANIMALS SENSE WEATHER CHANGE.

Mere superstition, so the weather authorities say, are many of the long-distance weather predictions based on the conduct of animals. No one, so far as we know, has compiled a record of these so-called omens, but their number is multiple. They are based on a belief that animals are able to tell months in advance, for example, the character of the coming winter.

If hunters bring in a story to the effect that squirrels have made heavy stores of nuts, it is taken to mean that a severe winter impends. If early caught fur-bearing animals have a heavy, thick coat, that is another sign of a severe winter, or a thin coat the contrary. If bird migrations are delayed after the usual date of the southward flight, a sign is seen of an open winter. Numerous other beliefs based on fancy ability of animals to foresee weather conditions months ahead, and base their preparations on them, have wide currency. Sometimes signs are taken from the vegetable world, as for example the past fall in the middle west. Corn husks, it was related, were much heavier than usual—that meant a hard winter.

The reasoning, such as it is, in many of these weather signs, is apparent on the surface. In the case of others it isn't as with the most famous and well known of them all—the ground-hog sign. If Mister Woodchuck on Candlemas day—February 2—sees his shadow, issuing experimentally from his den, then winter will have another flight. "Otherwise an early spring impends."

Observation over a part of a single lifetime would demonstrate most of these weather signs as unreliable, yet they cling on, especially in country districts. It is possible that they do so, in part, because they shadow into animal signs of a different class which are dependable. From the conduct of animals, accurate weather predictions can, within certain limits, be made.

This dependable class of animal weather signs is uniformly short-distance as to prophecy—no longer than the daily newspaper weather forecast. They occur because animals are more sensitive to atmospheric changes than human beings, and sense an approaching weather change hours in advance. It is apparent to man. In this capacity, animals are really nothing more nor less than barometers, registering as accurately as the most delicately constituted instrument in the meteorological observatory.

One animal barometer in this class much observed east and west during the summer season is the swallow. The swallow is insectivorous to the last degree. Other than insects hardly pass its bill from one season to another, and it captures this food on the wing. Thus it happens that as a weather forecaster the swallow on thousands of farms is always ready with an answer.

Swallows flying high indicate fair weather. Swallows flying low presage a storm. The explanation of these "signs" is simple. The relative level at which swallows fly is determined by the whereabouts of insects. In the case of fair weather or clearing weather, the higher will insects be found, while the higher will swallows be found, while growing density, forces them to levels near the ground, where the swallows will be noticed in pursuit of them.

It has been observed by New Englanders that ants, sensing an approaching rain, will close the entrance to their small hills, and conversely, as weather clears, will open them. To this extent ants are found reliable forecasters. Instinctively they react to changes in the atmosphere, and close their hills for protection against water.

A late fall and winter weather sign which many country boys using box traps have learned the accuracy of is furnished by the small coney rabbit, in rare cases by the more wary jack rabbit. These boy trappers note that catches of rabbits are always better just before a storm—the longer and more severe that storm proves, the more numerous the rabbits caught. Here again a change in the atmosphere has warned the rabbit tribe that a spell during which food will be hard to obtain is at hand, and instinctively to "fill up," even to the point of entering traps they formerly had avoided. Country boys of New England know that if there is ever a time when a rabbit will enter a box trap, it is just before a snow storm.

Doubtless other instances in which wild creatures function in the role of genuine weather forecasters could be advanced.—Scientific American.

Enamel Peeling Off Tags.

The cream colored enamel, which forms the background for the 1922 automobile license tags, is peeling off of a large number of tags. A number of these peeling tags can be seen and protests have already been sent to the State Highway Department at Harrisburg by the owners of the defective tags.

The tags were made in the Huntingdon reformatory and the officials there state that the defect is due to the composition entering into the light colored enamel which has a tendency to crack off the metal surface of the tags. As fast as the Highway Department receives complaints duplicate tags are issued from the reformatory. The police all over the State have received orders not to arrest drivers of cars the license numbers of which are obscured by the enamel peeling off.

Rules on Inheritance Taxes.

Harrisburg, Jan. 18.—The question as to when the discount period for prompt payment of inheritance taxes on estate of a person presumed to be dead begins has been settled in an opinion by Deputy Attorney George Ross. It is held a 5 per cent. discount shall be allowed if the payment be made within three months from the date of final confirmation of the decree of the Orphans' court wherein the presumption of death was adjudicated.

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