

AT THE SIGN OF THE LAST CHANCE.

(Continued from page 2, Col. 6.)

when they expected he was dying and sent for his brother.

"Duke never thought to speak about the dentist that had come in to Drybone and gone on to Buffalo, and the Kid naturally thought it was Doc Barker who had done the job on Duke's teeth. And Buck he said nothing. So Kid drops in to the hospital next time he's in town for a spree at the hog ranch, and invites the Doc to put a gold edging on his teeth for him.

"Not in my line," says Doc. "I'm a surgeon. And I've got no instruments for such a job."

"You had 'em for Duke Gardner," says the Kid. "Why not for me?"

"That was a dentist," says Doc. "While I was getting Duke's arm in to shape."

"So Toothpick he goes out. He feels offended at a difference being made between him and Duke, and he sits in the hog ranch thinking it over and comforting himself with some whisky. He doesn't believe in any dentist, and about four o'clock in the afternoon he returns to the Doc's office and says he insists on having the job done. And Doc he gets hot and says he's not a dentist and he orders Toothpick out of the office. And Toothpick he goes back to the hog ranch feeling awful sore at the discrimination between him and Duke.

"Well, about two o'clock a. m. Doc wakes up with a jump, and there's Toothpick. Toothpick thumps a big wad of bills down on the bureau—he'd been saving his time up for a big spree, and he had the best part of four or five months' pay in his wad—and Doc saw right away Toothpick was drunk clear through. And Toothpick jams his gun against the Doc's stomach. "You'll fix my teeth," he says. "You'll fix 'em right now. I'm just as good as Duke Gardner or any country and my money's just as good as Duke's, and I've just as much of it, and you'll do it now."

"I remember. I remember," said Marshal. "That's what the Kid told Doc. He beat his fist on the table and shook with enjoyment."

"Well, of course Doc Barker put on his pants at once. Doc could always make a quick decision. He takes the Kid out where he keeps his instruments and he lights his lamp; and he brings another lamp, and explains that daylight would be better, but that he'll do the best he can. And he begins rummaging among his knives and scissors which make a jingling and scissoring which make a jingling and scissoring which make interest. And Doc Barker he keeps rummaging, and Toothpick keeps sitting and watching, and Doc he brings out a horrible-looking saw and gives it a sort of a swing in the air.

"Are you going to use that thing on me?" inquires Toothpick.

"Open your mouth," says Doc.

"Toothpick opens his mouth but he shuts it again. "Duke didn't mention it hurt him," says he.

"It didn't, not to speak of," says Doc. "How can I know how much it will hurt, if you don't let me see your teeth?" So the Kid's mouth goes open and Doc he takes a little microscope and sticks it in and looks right and looks left up and down very slow and takes out the microscope. "My, my, my," he says, very serious.

"Is it going to hurt bad?" inquires Toothpick.

"I can do it," says Doc. "I can do it. But I'll have to charge for emergency and operating at night."

"Will it take long?" says the Kid.

"I must have an hour, or I decline to be responsible," says the Doc. "The condition is complicated. Your friend Mr. Gardner's teeth offered no such difficulties." And Doc collects every instrument he can lay his hands on that comes anywhere near looking like what dentists have. "My fee is usually two hundred dollars for emergency night operations," says he, "but that is for folks in town."

"Toothpick brings out his wad and shoves it to Doc, and he counts it and hands back twenty dollars. "I'll accept a hundred and fifty," he says, "and I'll do my best for you."

"By this time Toothpick's eyes are bulging away out of his head, but he had to put up too much play to back down from it. Duke didn't mention a thing about his hurting him," he repeats.

"I think I can manage," says Doc. "You tell me right off if the pain is too much for you. Where's my sponge?" So he gets the sponge, and he pours some ether on it and starts sponging the Kid's teeth.

"The Kid he's grabbing the chair till his knuckles are all white. Doc lets the sponge come near the candle, and puff! up it flares and Toothpick gives a jump.

"It's nothing," says Doc. "But a little more, and you and I and this room would have been blown up. That's why I am obliged to charge double for these night emergency operations. It's the gold edging that's the risk."

"I'd hate to have you take any risk," says Toothpick. "Will it be risky to scrape my teeth, just to give them a little scrape, y'know, like you done for Duke?"

"Oh, no says Doc, "that will not be risky." So Doc Barker he takes an ear cleaner and he scrapes, while Toothpick holds his mouth open and grabs the chair. "There," says Doc. "Come again." And out flies Toothpick like Indians were after him. Forgets the hog ranch and his night of joy waiting for him there, jumps on his horse and makes camp short-

ly after sunrise. It was that same morning Buck heard about Toothpick and Doc Barker, and laid flat down in the sage-brush."

"Buck sure played it on the Kid at that Wolf Dance," said Work.

"Toothpick thought the ladies had stayed after the storm."

Again Marshal beat his fist on the table. We had become a lively company.

"On the Crow reservation, wasn't it?" said Henry.

"Right on that flat between the Agency and Fort Custer, along the river. The ladies were all there."

"She always stayed as pretty as a bride," said Old Man Clarke.

"Have another drink, Uncle Jerry."

"No more, no more, thank you just the same. I'm just a-sitting here for a while."

"The Kid had on his buckskin and admired himself to death. Admired his own dancing. You remember how it started to pour. Of course the Kid's buckskin pants started to shrink on him. They got up to his knees. About that same time the ladies started to go home, not having brought umbrellas, and out runs Buck into the ring. He whispers to Kid, "Your bare legs are scandalous. Look at the ladies. Go hide yourself. I'll let you know when you can come out."

"Away runs Kid till he finds a big wet sage bush and crawls into it deep. The sun came out pretty soon. But Toothpick sat in his wet sage bush, waiting to be told the ladies had gone. Us boys stayed till the dance was over and away runs Buck to the sage bush.

"My," says he, "I'm sure sorry, Kid. The ladies went two hours ago. I'll have to get Doc Barker to fix up my memory."

"I used to be hell and repeat," said Old Man Clarke from his chair. "Play that again. Play that quadrille," he ordered peremptorily.

The fiddler smiled and humored him. We listened. There was silence for a while.

"Elephant and Castle," said the man at the back of the room. "Near London."

"That is senseless, too," said Henry. "We have more sensible signs in this country."

Jed Goodland played the quadrille quietly, like a memory, and as they made their bets, their boots tapped the floor to its rhythm.

"Swing yer dummies," said Old Man Clarke. "Cage the queen. All shake your feet. Doe se doe and doe doe doe. Sa shay back. Git away, girls git away fast. Gents in the center and four hands around. There you go to your seats."

"Give us 'Sandy Land' again," said Stirling. And Jed played "Sandy Land."

"Doc Barker became Governor of Wyoming," said Work, "about 1890."

"What year did they abandon the stage route?" I asked.

"Later," said Henry. "We had the mail here till the Burlington road got to Sheridan."

"See here," said the man at the back of the room. "Here's something."

"Well, I hope it beats Elephant and Castle," said Henry.

"It's not a sign-board, it's an old custom," said the man.

"Well let's have your old custom." The man referred to his magazine.

"It says," he continued, "that many a flourishing inn which had been prosperous for two or three hundred years would go down for one reason or another, till no travelers passed on to the old places where the coaches changed horses or stopped for meals going north and south every day, and along other important routes, as well. These routes were given up after the railroads began to spread."

"The railroads finally killed the coaches. So unless an inn was in some place that continued to be important, like a town where the railroads brought strangers same as the coaches used to, why, the inn's business would dry up. And that's where the custom comes in. When some inn had outlived its time and it was known that trade had left it for good, they would take down the sign of that inn and bury it. It says that right here." He touched the page.

The quiet music of Jed Goodland ceased. He laid his fiddle in his lap. One by one, each player laid down his cards. The bullets holes were there and the empty shelves. Henry looked at his watch.

"Quittin' so early?" asked Old Man Clarke. "What's your hurry?"

"Five minutes of twelve," said Henry. He went to the door and looked up at the sky.

"Cold," said Old Man Clarke. "Stars small and bright. Wintor's a-coming, I tell you."

Standing at the open door, Henry looked out at the night for a while and then turned and faced his friends in their chairs round the table.

"What do you say, boys?" Without a word they rose. The man at the back of the room had risen. Jed Goodland was standing. Still in his chair, remote and busy with his own half-dim thoughts, Old Man Clarke sat watching us almost without interest.

"Gilbert," said Henry to the man at the back of the room "there's a ladder in the corner by the stairs. Jed, you'll find a spade in the shed outside the kitchen door."

"What's your hurry, boys?" asked Old Man Clarke. "Tomorrow I'll get ye a big elk."

But as they all passed him in silence he rose and joined them without curiosity, and followed without understanding.

The ladder was set up, and Henry mounted it and laid his hands upon the sign-board. Presently it came loose, and he handed it down to James Work who stood ready for it. It was a little large for one man to carry without awkwardness, and two corners of it while Work held Marshal stepped forward and took the others.

"You boys go first with it," said Henry. "Over there by the side of the creek. I'll walk next. Stirling, you take the spade."

Their conjured youth had fled from their faces, vanished from their voices.

"I've got the spade, Henry."

"Give it to Stirling, Jed. I'll want your fiddle along."

Moving very quietly, we followed Henry in silence. Old Man Clarke is one of us, Work and Marshal leading with the sign-board between them. And presently we reached the banks of Willow Creek.

"About here," said Henry.

They laid the sign-board down, and we stood round it, while Stirling struck his spade into the earth. It did not take long.

"Jed," said Henry, "you might play now. Nothing will be said. Give us 'Sound the dead march as ye bear me along.'"

In the night, the strains of that somber melody rose and fell, always quietly, as if Jed were whispering memories with his bow.

How they must have thanked the darkness that hid their faces from each other. But the darkness could not hide sound. None of us had been prepared for what the music would instantly do to us.

Somewhere near me I heard a man struggling to keep command of himself; then he walked away with his grief alone. A neighbor followed him, shaken with emotions out of control. And so within a brief time, before the melody had reached its first cadence, none was left by the grave except Stirling with his spade and Jed with his fiddle, each now and again sweeping a hand over his eyes quickly, in furtive shame at himself. Only one of us withstood it. Old Man Clarke, puzzled, went wandering from one neighbor to the next saying, "Boys, what's up with ye? Who's dead?"

Although it was to the days of their youth, not mine, that they were bidding this farewell and I had only looked on when the beads were golden and the betting was high, they counted me as one of them to-night. I felt it—and I knew it when Henry melted nearer to me and touched me lightly with his elbow.

So the sign of the Last Chance was laid on its last place, and Stirling covered it and smoothed the earth while we got hold of ourselves, and Jed Goodland played the melody more and more quietly until it sank to the lightest breath and died away.

"That's all I guess," said Henry. "Thank you, Jed. Thank you, boys. I guess we can go home. The requiem of the golden beards, their romance, their departed West, too good to live for ever, was finished. As we returned slowly in the stillness of the cold starlight, the voice of Old Man Clarke, shrill and wretched, disembodied as an echo, startled me by its sudden outbreak.

"None of you knowed her boys. She was a buckskin son-of-a-gun. All at the bottom of Lake Champlain."

"Take him, boys," said Henry. "Take Uncle Jerry to bed, please. I guess I'll stroll around for a while out here by myself. Good night, boys."

I found that I could not bid him good night, and the others seemed as little able to speak as I was. Old Man Clarke said nothing more. He followed along with us as he had come, more like some old dog, not aware of our errand nor seeming to care to know, merely contented, his dim understanding remote within himself. He needed no attention when he came to the deserted stage office where he slept. He sat down on the bed and began to pull off his boots cheerfully. As we were shutting his door, he said:

"Boys tomorrow I'll get ye a fat bull elk."

"Good night, Jed," said Marshal. "Good night, Gilbert," said Stirling.

"Good night, all." The company dispersed along the silent street.

As we reentered the saloon—Work and I, who were both sleeping in the hotel—the deserted room seemed to be speaking to us, it halted us on its threshold. The cards lay on the table, the vacant chairs round it. There stood the empty bottles on the shelf. Above them were the bullet holes in the wall where the clock used to be. In the back of the room the magazine lay open on the table with a lamp burning. The other lamp stood on the bar, and one lamp hung over the card-table. Work extinguished this one, the lamp by the magazine he brought to light us to our rooms where we could see to light our bedroom lamps. We left the one on the bar for Henry.

"Jed was always handy with his fiddle," said Work at the top of the stairs. "And his skill stays by him. Well, good night."

A long while afterwards I heard a door closing below and knew that Henry had come in from his stroll.

—Hearst's International Cosmopolitan.

FARM NOTES.

—When buying celery plants get them from a patch that has been sprayed for blight.

—A hen will eat two pounds of oyster shell and a pound of grit in a year. They must have grit and lime in some form to do any work for the egg basket.

—Cod liver oil in mash or grain for young chicks prevents leg weakness and aids normal growth. Feed at the rate of one pint of the oil to 100 pounds of feed.

—Yes sir, after a couple years, you'll take more pride in showing your neighbors and visitors that forest you set, than the new silo or the fine stand of alfalfa.

—By treating fence posts with creosote, many kinds of wood that are ordinarily almost worthless may be made to last twenty-five or more years with only a small additional cost for the treatment.

—The petted calf is the one that responds most easily to the care of the young stockman. When the junior club member feeds his calf, the time that he spends in petting it a little is not lost time.

—Spring calves will do better if not turned on pasture at all during the summer. Keep them in clean, well-ventilated quarters. Feed milk or milk substitute with good quality hay and some green feeds.

—Cow testing association reports show that as the production of butterfat increases from 100 pounds per cow to 300 pounds, the price received for the roughage the cow eats increases from \$5.50 per ton to \$39 per ton.

—When the young shoots of black raspberries are about 18 inches long their tops should be pinched off to force development of the lateral buds into branched canes. The bearing surface of next year's crop will thus be kept closed to the ground and a top heavy condition will be avoided.

—Now is the time to begin rouging or removing raspberry and blackberry plants affected by lead curl or mosaic. Spraying will not control virus diseases. Curling, crinkling, mottling or yellowing of leaves, dwarfing of leaves and canes, and partial death of the plants are symptoms of the disease.

—To control brown rot and scab of peaches, spray with self-boiled lime-sulphur of the 16-16-100 formula. Champion Carmen, and Rochester are the most susceptible varieties. Apply sprays about one month before the fruit begins to ripen. Be sure mist covers all fruit and leaves. Large drops of spray tend to spot the fruit.

—Selection of cockerels for breeding should begin at the broiler age. By saving twice as many cockerels as will be needed, further selection can be made as the birds develop. Often the mistake is made of selling all of the early cockerels for broilers, while the breeding birds are chosen from late hatches. This results usually in breeding cockerels of small size when mature.

—The fruit growers must not falter in their spray application if mid-summer and fall are to bring in abundant crops of high quality fruit. If the mid-summer applications are neglected much of the benefits which should have been derived from early sprays will be lost and the pests will gain a foothold that will make them more difficult to control. Persistence as well as thoroughness is a requisite in good spraying.

—Thrifless colts are often found infested with blood worms, and teething also aggravates the condition. Have the teeth put in order by a veterinarian; then feed whole oats and wheat bran, ear corn, carrots and good mixed clover and timothy hay. If you find a collection of scaly substances around the anus or see worms in the feces, mix in the dampened feed night and morning for a week two teaspoonful of a mixture of two parts of salt and one part each of dried sulphate of iron, tartar emetic and flour of sulphur; then discontinue the treatment for ten days, and then give it for another week. Clip the hair from the legs above the knees and hocks and from the belly and sides to a line with the straps of a breast collar and breeching.

—The dairy cow furnishes a better market today for feed than ever before, says H. R. Searles, dairy specialist with the agricultural extension division, University of Minnesota.

Mr. Searles has been comparing prices and finds that while the prices of dairy feeds have increased 24 per cent since 1914, butterfat prices have mounted about 70 per cent in the same period.

"In 1914, with butterfat selling at 30 cents a pound, the 300 pound cow returned \$90 at a feed cost of \$45, or a return over feed cost of \$45," says Mr. Searles. "In 1927, with butter 50 cents a pound, the 300-pound cow returned \$153 at a feed cost of about \$58, leaving a return over feed cost of \$95. This year, then, in 1927 returned \$52 more over feed cost than she did in 1914. Translated into terms of return over feed costs, the increase in favor of 1927 has been around 115 per cent."

"It pays to feed grain to good cows. For the man who has the cows they are a better market for his feed grain than the elevator. If he is short of grain he can afford to buy it at present prices. The proper grain ration fed with roughage will greatly increase his income for the roughage he is selling through the cow."

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A. FAUBLE

BEARS QUIT WINTER DIET.

Roused from the inactivity of winter, bears in several counties descended on nearby farms to break their fasts, according to reports to the Board of Game Commissioners.

During May seventeen claims covering the killing of 51 sheep and the destruction of 18 beehives were reported.

As a result of complaints from Trego county a 300-pound bear that was blamed for several raids was killed.

THEN AND NOW.

Thirty-two years ago the appropriation received by the Board of Game Commissioners amounted to the scant sum of \$800.00 and this was used entirely for postage and express. This year \$200,000 is being set aside by the Board for the purchase of additional refuges and public shooting grounds.