



A. A. TREMBERT

with the McMaster Evangelistic Band in the Baptist Church.

VALUABLE HOTEL PROPERTY FOR SALE

The undersigned has received instructions to sell by Public Auction at THE MURPHY HOUSE, MARKDALE, Thurs., Aug. 3, '11 at 2 p. m. that Valuable Hotel Property known as the MURPHY HOUSE AND STABLES

This property consists of a large two-story brick Hotel with frame kitchen attached. Also a large frame stable and frame shed.

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—BY— CLIVE PHILLIPPS WOLLEY (AUTHOR OF "GOLD, GOLD IN CARIBOO," ETC.)

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CHAPTER IX. A Ride for Life

"Where are you going to, Jim?" asked the Boss, who had followed Combe out of the sick room. Jim came back from his dream with a start and turned a very white and haggard face to his old friend. "To Soda Creek to fetch Protheroe if you can spare me."

"But you can't go yet. You haven't had a bite of food to-day, and after all, Anstruther's injuries do not appear to be so very serious."

"Can't tell. She might lose him." There was something strangely pitiful in the way in which all Jim's mind turned upon what she might suffer, the woman who had just dealt him the hardest blow of his life.

"Oh, nonsense, man, she has got to take her chance like the rest. I insist on your having something before you go."

"Well, if you insist, Boss," replied Jim, with a queer laugh, "you can put some cold grub and a little whiskey in a cartridge bag for me. I can eat when the horse plays out."

"What do you mean to ride? We've ridden the tails off the best of the stock. Will you take that big hunter? Anstruther's."

"No, I'll take the young roan. He's the only horse that could make it."

"That devil! He isn't broken and never will be."

out of his way, and alongside him, though he could barely see it as he raced past it, ran three and twenty miles of the fencing of the winter pasture.

Twice he grazed it, so dark had the day become, and each time he left a fragment of his clothing behind him to mark his course.

His partner Fete was playing his hand now for him, and he refused to interfere in the game. As long as it lasted it was excellent to fly through the dark stinging net, and as to the end he cared nothing.

He cannoned into the flank of one of the great Hereford bulls, half seen for a moment in the gloom, so that his horse reeled and slithered, and almost lost his feet, but the man only laughed as they staggered and went on.

It was then that he felt how much his own strength had waned. That day he had so far eaten nothing. He had done work enough to kill an ordinary man, and unless he was much mistaken the boot on his left leg was slowly filling with his own blood.

He could ride the roan with one hand now. With the other he contrived to extract the sandwiches and flask from the cartridge bag, which still rode securely on his back, and reducing his pace to a lope he ate and drank as he rode.

He supposed that the night must have commenced, though there were none of the ordinary signs of time to guide him, and he marvelled at the endurance of his horse.

Fortunately the savage wind had not suffered the sleet to lie sufficiently upon the plateau over which he rode to seriously deteriorate the going.

For half of that night Combe hardly knew that he was riding. A man sat in the saddle in the heart of a great darkness, swaying in time to his horse's stride, and at the proper time lending such assistance as the rider can to the ridden, but that was not Jim Combe.

Jim himself was away, sometimes in one place, sometimes in another. Now he was holding a yellow-haired child up on his shoulder so that she could see over the corral and watch old Al lassoing a wild cow; now he was back in England in places of purely imaginary magnificence, where a young queen with that child's features was holding court amongst innumerable Anstruther's who moved slowly and spoke in Book-English with a low-pitched drawl; or again he was back in the sick-room looking into the heart of the girl he had loved since she had grown grass high and reading in it the name of another.

CHAPTER X. Close Quarters

For over an hour Combe lay where he was, watching the horse and thinking, whilst the blackness of the night paled and grew even more weird and ghastly from the grey that had crept into it.

Then it seemed to him that some thing heavier than a coyote moved among the sage brush on the ridge to his left. He listened, but the noise was not repeated. Jim was too good a plainsman to persuade himself that his ears had played him false because he could not understand their message, and beside, the red roan had heard it too.

The horse was standing with his ears pricked, watching as he would never have watched for coyotes in spite of the cowboys' constant attention those vagabond thieves were far too numerous on the home ranch or the roan to pay much attention to them.

In the mist and darkness he might never have noticed them at the distance at which they passed, so vague and so silent were they, if his ears had not warned him of their coming; but they saw him, of that he was sure, though he had not stirred in his lair of wet sage brush, and curiously enough his horse had not whinnied.

For a moment he thought of calling to them, but men do not halt every passer-by on the prairie, and he changed his mind. He did not want anything of them, so he lay still, whilst they, without a pause or turn of the head, rode silently past him and disappeared in the mist.

"Indians, of course," he muttered, "they must have seen the horse." And then he fell to wondering why they had made no sign and why they were riding at that hour in the morning towards the Risky Ranch.

In the ordinary course of things though they would have passed by in silence, and near enough to satisfy their own curiosity.

He did not feel easy about it. The expedition of the posse had accomplished nothing unless it were to prove that the Chilcotens had broken up their camp and left the country, probably for an early winter hunt towards Tatlo Lake, and in all the years that he had lived on the plains and in B. C. Jim had never had any serious trouble with Indians.

He had become so used to them indeed as peaceful neighbors, that he had almost forgotten the red stories of which the plains used to be full; legends of burnt ranches, of men and women murdered across their own thresholds, and brutally mutilated in order that their long hair might trim a chief's robe.

There was a terror abroad on the ranch lands, not so much seen, felt, and though he scoffed at presentiment, he was conscious of it himself.

The cattle had been disappearing as they had never disappeared before; there had been no friendly visits from the Chilcotens as there used to be. Whenever he had met any of them, even before the quarrel in their camp, they had been sullen and silent, and there had been the reappearance of Davies' murderer and that unlucky quarrel.

Jim would have liked it better if the Indians had visited the ranch to demand compensation for those broken rifles, and would almost have been inclined to listen to their claims, but they had made no sign.

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