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THE :: CALGARY :: STAMPEDE ::

By RAYMOND L. SCHROCK and PAUL GULICK.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Cont.)

Corbett, the star rider of the Bar O, was the driver of the Bar O Chuck Wagon. It was evident to the officials and to the spectators that for these two outfits, no other chuck wagons existed at all. They were going to fight it out alone anyway. This rivalry was urged by many later as the real reason for what happened, though the judges rightfully pointed to the guilty water barrel that the Big and Little V boys left behind as evidence that it was premeditated.

At any rate the V driver had calculated with deadly accuracy the time it would take for the Bar O outfit to round the last barrel and turn into the track. The Bar O stuff got packed first and the team started. Stevens had not received the word to go from his own riders and as a matter of fact they were not ready. They were so busy watching the other packers that things slipped through their fingers.

The stove, even, was not lashed tight. They must have known that the judges would disqualify them as soon as they saw that even if they didn't for leaving the water barrel out of the wagon. Nevertheless they started at the same time that the Bar O started. The Bar O had a longer loop to make to round its barrels, but when they were passed the second one they were virtually in the track, only having the width of their outfit to go. The V wagon had a shorter loop but a longer run on the track. However, Stevens had calculated all this, as well as the probable speed of the two teams.

As Stevens got started a great shout went up from the audience, informing him of the water barrel left behind, and as the team turned around the first barrel stake the stove fell out of the wagon. But Stevens did not stop. As he rounded the second barrel he was seen to rein in his team. Possibly he was afraid to make the turn at such speed. Possibly he had another thought in mind. Anyway, when he had stopped down sufficiently, he urged his team on to the uttermost of their speed, using his whip for all he was worth.

Now, of course, the track at no place was wide enough for eight camp wagons to drive abreast. It was difficult for four, though there had been a race when four chuck wagons had run a dead heat at the stampee and had divided the money accordingly. But it had never happened that more than two or three were ready to swing into the track at the very same instant. There was always some difference in the speed of the men packing up the wagons.

The great advantage that any team enjoyed by reason of a quick pack was to secure the pole position on the track. The track was long enough so that a good driver could easily hold it at the turns, and it was not necessary to swing very wide to stay on all four wheels.

It seemed to everyone that Stevens was bending every energy to get in this pole position, until he eased his team up. Then it looked from the grand stand as though he was afraid of a collision with the Bar O team. He had made the closest possible turn around his last barrel, and when he hit the track he was on the very edge of the track. He did not turn out one foot to let the Bar O team have a chance to swing. Instead of that Corbett later asserted that

Carry it always with you!

WRIGLEYS

Keeps teeth clean, breath sweet, appetite keen and digestion good.

After Every Meal.

Stevens turned his team deliberately into his as the wagon was making its turn.

But whether by accident or intention, a collision was inevitable. The two teams came together with a crash that could be heard way across the quarter mile track. The Bar O was of course at a disadvantage. It was turning, whereas the other was straight away and on all four wheels. The V wagon withstood the shock without so much as a broken wheel; the Bar O wagon turned completely over, pulling down the wheel pair of horses, and throwing its assortment of camp truck out onto the track. The lead horses smashed their whiffletrees and dashed down the track driverless, for Corbett was under the wagon.

Attendants rushed from all quarters to the smashed wagon, and Corbett's own quartette of riders hurriedly dismounting went to his assistance. They had to lift the wagon off his prostrate body. And when they at last pulled him to his feet, he sank back again in a heap groaning with pain. There was a call for a doctor, and the ambulance that is always handy at a Stampedé came up on the double quick. The doctor gave Corbett a hurried examination. He shook his head. Dr. Ralph was a friend of both Regan and Alberta, and he knew what this would mean to them both.

As Corbett was paced in a stretcher, Regan himself came up panting. He had seen the danger, and while not a suspicious man he was very strongly of the opinion that it was an intentional accident. But his main anxiety, of course, was for Corbett.

"What's the damage, Doc?" gasped Regan.

Dr. Ralph put his hand on the other man's shoulder before he spoke and Regan read in his eyes that it was serious.

"I'm sorry, old man," he said, "Corbett's leg is broke."

CHAPTER XVII

The Substitute Rider

Corbett's accident was a terrific blow to Regan. It made no matter about the Chuck Wagon Race, though of course he would protest it. But no amount of protest would mend Corbett's broken leg. Regan went over to the stretcher on which the injured man was being carried to the ambulance. He was in a daze.

"How did it happen, Corbett?" he asked. "I'm awfully sorry. Are you bad hurt?"

"Couldn't be worse for us, Boss. Don't mind about me. Call off your bets on the Roman race if you can, and he sank back on the stretcher."

Call them off. Could he do that? With anyone else he could, but with Morton, that was hardly possible. But he would try. Morton had been seated right in front of him in the grand stand, and he had taken this seat on purpose to enjoy the other's discomfort. Regan slowly made his way back to his seat. All the elasticity had gone out of his step; all the confidence out of his heart and his face somehow seemed sadder and more careworn.

As he entered the little box, Morton turned around to him, a mingled look of fear and satisfaction on his face. By no stretch of imagination could anyone say there was any sorrow there. However, he tried to put a little in his voice as he said:

"That was a tough break for you, Andy. Is your boy much scratched up?"

"Couldn't be worse. Under the circumstances, I guess I'll have to call off my bet with you on the Roman Race and I'm going to advise a man to do the same."

"Oho! So you're a we-cher, too, as well as a piker. I'll be damned if I ever thought that of you before, and I've known you all these years. We-cher, we-cher."

The real reason why Regan had been inveigled into the huge bets was that he hated to be called a piker. He had always been cautious. It had always paid him to be. The only times he had ever lost were when he had allowed someone's speculative instinct or advice to sway him. As a boy he had been called a piker because he hated to bet, and when he did it was such infinitesimal sums that the other boys laughed at him. The same thing had happened at college, and one of the worst battles he had ever had, had been with his chum when he had, half in earnest and half in fun, called him a piker. That was the real reason that he had fallen so easily for Morton's bet—the appreciation of Piker.

To be called a piker was bad enough, but to make his blood boil, just to be called a we-cher and in

front of the whole grand stand—it was absolutely unbearable. Furthermore, Regan had a strong hunch that this accident to Corbett was no accident at all. Now he was morally certain that it had been planned by this same arch-fiend—A. Morton. He saw it all now, now that it was too late. But there was no way to prove what he suspected, and unless he could there was no way to get out of the bet.

It isn't to be supposed that Regan sat calmly and thought out all this. The thoughts ran through his brain like lightning. Like red hot darts they stabbed him to madness. Losing all control of himself as he realized his utter impotence against the man he now knew had contrived this plot against him, he made a dash at him over the low rail of the box. But Morton was ready for that. He had estimated the Regan temper, and he knew how far he could go and when the fighting would begin. He had friends in the box with him who caught Regan, and his blows fell harmlessly short. But his tongue was unhampered and unrestrained.

"You vile dirty cheap scoundrel, you mucker you. You planned all this. You crooked gambler, you ordered your team to run Corbett down to get him out of the way. I'll have the law on you for this. The judges will never let you get away with it. But not even you, you swine, can call me a we-cher. I'll run this Roman race even if I have to stick my cock on the Palominos. And all my bets stand. My men can do as they please. And when the race is over, look out for me. The first time I ever see you I am going to give you such a licking that no one on the Vv ranch will recognize you."

And with that he stormed out of the box and hurried away to the stable.

"Where's Blackie?" he demanded excitedly. "He'll have to ride the Roman Race. He is the only one who has even exercised that team."

"Blackie's drunk," said a cowboy, bluntly.

"Drunk as usual," groaned Regan. "No, drunker'n usual," replied the cowboy disloyally.

"Well, I don't see anything for it. You'll have to sober him up and get him in shape. I've seen that man do some very surprising things even when he was dead drunk, and he can ride drunk or sober."

Blackie had already been told that Corbett was out, and he had been preparing for the race. The shock of Corbett's injury with its aftermath on himself had done a lot to sober him up at that. In somewhat crestfallen manner he did his best to assure the boss that he could ride just as well as Corbett. Corbett's shoes, shirt and trousers had all been taken into Blackie's room at the stable.

Though he had been hiding from the law all day and had been remarkably successful in dodging the two representatives who were so anxious to come across him, Dan Malloy had not missed anything of the entertainment in the arena. He had seen the Chuck Wagon Race and had been in a position to assure himself that it was no accident that had put Corbett out of the Roman Race.

Dan knew, as well as everyone, and better than most, what the lack of Corbett, little as he liked his technique, meant to the Palominos. All unknown to anyone about the ranch, he had ridden each of them separately, and he knew just how speedy they were. He knew too that for the best results on a circular track that Corbett did not have them hitched up right. Then he thought of Regan losing that splendid ranch and of little Alberta going hungry and dowdless. And as he thought and thought, shuffling toward the stable, the same high excited feeling that had possessed him as he watched the procession of the brave and hardy men who had made possible the settlement of Calgary and the great Northwest came over him again. The mantle of their splendid spirit and achievement fell over him like a garment.

Hardly realizing what he was doing, Dan made a dash for the foreman's room, knocking over a cowboy on the way.

"Who's gone to ride the Roman Race?" he asked as he stopped to help the cowboy to his feet.

"Blackie, I guess. What do you care. You didn't bet a year's wages, did you?"

But Chuck Jones was gone.

Bursting open the door of the foreman's room, he found Blackie on the floor, trying desperately to get on Corbett's sneaks. He already had the shirt on. One shoe lay on the floor. Dan sat down beside the foreman and hurriedly put on the shoe. Blackie was in as ill a temper as a drunken man could possibly be in.

(To be continued)

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A Considerate Husband.

Davy McDonald and his wife Molly lived on an abandoned lumber tract in Texas in a small comfortable cottage. Their home was several miles from the nearest neighbor. They worked a small truck farm and kept a number of cows, pigs and many chickens.

Like many persons who live much by themselves and have never learned to make companions of books, they always retired very early in the evening and rose correspondingly early in the morning. Davy found the nights long and tiresome and was glad of an excuse to rise even before the proverbial lark. He was much like the man referred to by John G. Saxe in Early Rising.

"who cannot keep his precious head upon his pillow until it's fairly light."

In speaking to a fisherman who was spending a few days with him, Davy once said:

"I like to get up in the morning; 'long about half past three or four o'clock I wake up and can't go to sleep again; so I get up and go out in the barnyard and look at the pigs and cows and feed the chickens and putter round till breakfast is ready. Now the old woman is jest the other way; she never wants to get up, and I never wake her. I let her sleep jest as long as she wants to."

Now Davy had the reputation of being not overkind to or considerate of his wife, and his visitor was not a little surprised at this expression of conjugal solicitude.

"Ha, Davy, good for you," he said to himself. "I did not know that you were so thoughtful of your wife."

"Yes," resumed Davy, "I never call her or wake her up; as long as she has my breakfast on the table by six o'clock, I let her sleep jest as late as she wants to."

How Toads Climb.

The tree frogs or tree toads are so named from their habit of climbing trees, to which they adhere by means of small expansions at the extremities of the toes. They have the power to change their color to harmonize with their surroundings.

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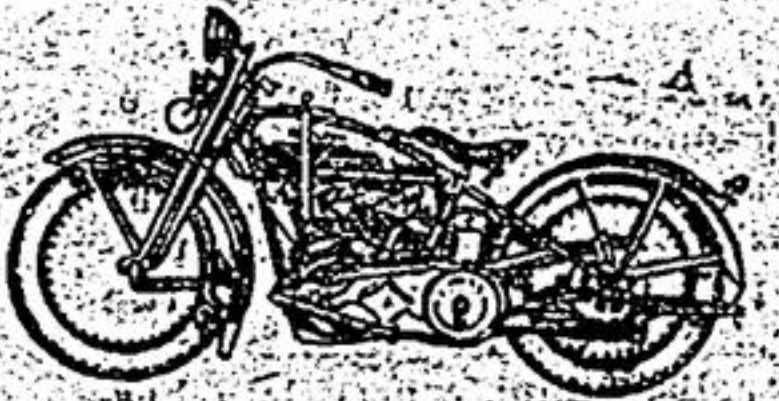
Next to Nothing. Mrs. Gassaway—"She married Cholly Nobraime, you know. What's her position in life?" Mrs. Stabb—"Next to nothing, my dear."

Ripers and Dancers.

When March, the gay piper, Has vanished with his song, Then comes April skipping—The green lanes along.

She cries her silver tears, Laughs her golden laughter, Then with a happy step May follows after.

—Frances Higgins.



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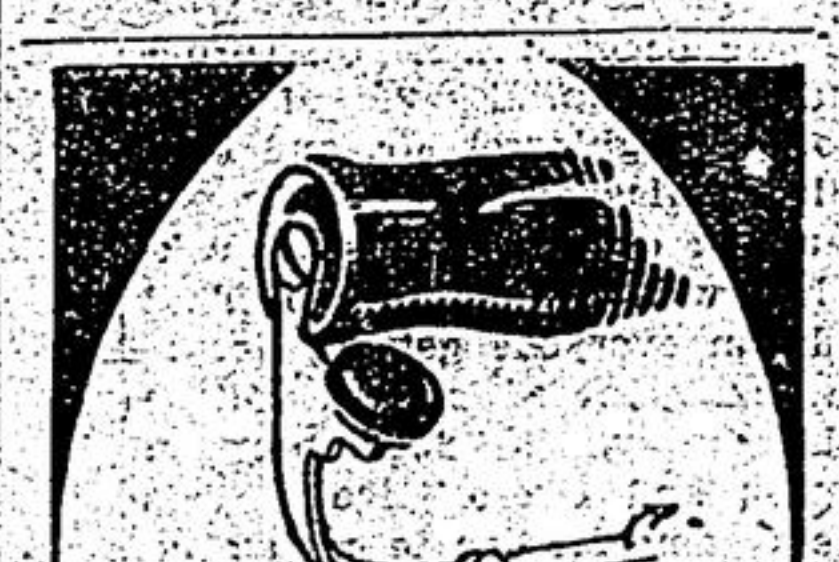
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