It was brutally said, but it had the

are all here now. If a man could get

course to Sody. There's five horses

"But we cain't leave the place un

and if no one gets through-well, then,

"Is it to be by day-light, or

For a moment there was stience,

"I guess it don't make no odds."

It was said so quietly, that no one

"The stakes are mine, Al, and

that Rolt, looking at him, wavered.

all agree to that. Otherwise I go."

well cut for the deal if he says so."

the cards, Rolt turned to Combe:

ards from Mrs. Rolt.

His ribs can't be knit yet.'

iren't the sort to holler."

coquetry, the dimple become almost

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assimilation of food, and unless vii

gestion is good the whole body suf-

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help me. Vinol was recommended

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pends upon nourishment and

we might come in."

"Don't you worry about

This settled it, and Rolt, turning to

things than death.

"How can we save them?"

ly before every one.

in the kitchen."

as he answered:

and then someone asked:

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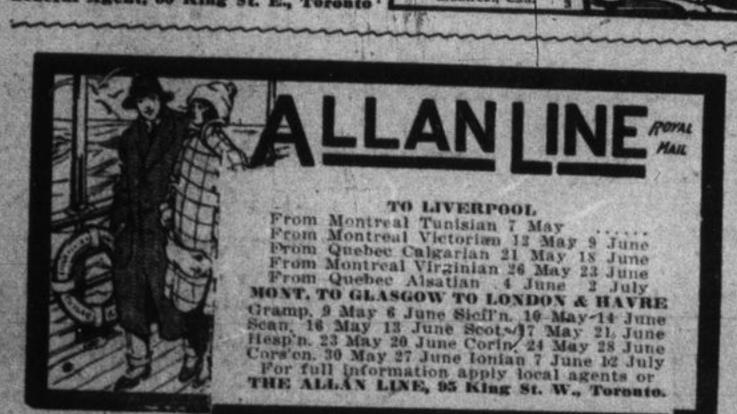
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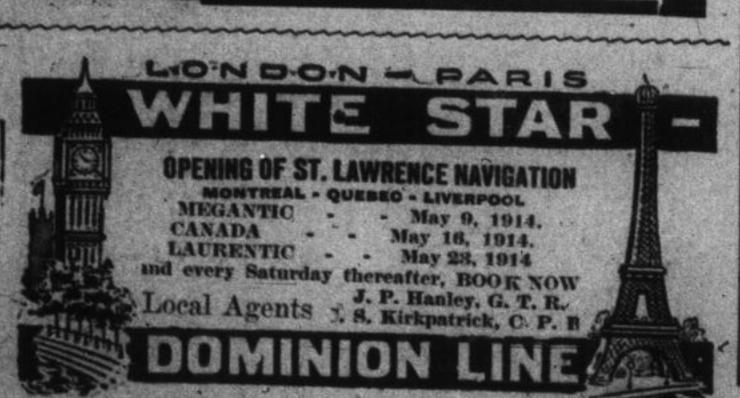
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"Always wanted the lead and would have it. Shot through the head from behind. Some of the devils must have been behind when he lit his

"I heard no shot," "Not likely to with the noise we were making. What's wrong with your neck, Anstruther? Cut it?" "Just touched, I fancy.' I got

when they hit him. Shall we take him into the house?" "Better not, and better say nothing about it to them upstairs. We can't do any more for him now, Boss," and Jim drew a large worked table-cover over the dead man's face and turned to see that the barricades were as

strong as they could be made. When he was at his post again he drew from his pocket that which the doctor had given him. It was a co mon playing-card and on it was writ- all gone. They won't do much attack- went to the table together, but Mrs. neath this the doctor had written big letters which wandered uncer tainly over the blank space: "So long, Jim. See you again some day."

so he knew it was coming, did he as Jim rode for a first shot, Boss?" mused Jim, "and he took it all back at the last, all his tall talk about science and annihilation of matter. Well, have guessed that the rough and guess the Handicapper knew the Doc's handicap, and will be the best judge. of his running."

And then, as he looked out in the reddened gloom, whilst his eyes tried to pierce through the fog. his mind tried to peer into that Next Room managed to place himself. He saw the triviality of the things which had so embittered him for the last few days, and even confessed to himself let me go." that when it came to fighting, his rival was not much of a muff after all. If that which had made the scratch on Anstruther's neck had been an inch or two to the left Jim Combe felt that get through. See here, Rolt. It's Al his memory of the last few days or me for this job, and Al's wounded, would have been a load for him to carry all the rest of his life. But the first grey light of the morning broug it Jim back from the Unknown to the arm. present with a shock. As the mists rolled away the temporary absence of the Indians was explained. They not master here. What do you say, had withdrawn to gather force for their real attack: Whatever answers my right? Combe went for me. The to the fiery cross amongst the r. d men had been flying around the country in the last two days, and Jim Combe had never known until that moment how many Indians there were scattered through the timber of Bri-

The hog's back was dotted with their camp fires and tents; a line of them stretched across the big meadow; another body of them held the road to Soda Creek. The ranch was books.' as regularly invested as if its foes had been European troops instead of mere redskins. With infinitely more cun ning than even Combe had given them credit for, the Chilcotens had allowed the white men to return un

Until this last morning Jim had fe ! certain that one or other would sucmorse almost unmanned him.

In his anguish of mind he tried speak to his little friend in the old way that had been so dear to both of them, but his tongue failed him, and she, not realizing that it was the old Jim, treated him with the coldness he had been at such trouble to teach her.

CHAPTER XXV.

You cannot hide death any more Nothing else will, and I don't believe than you can escape it. There is a hat he could sit a horse for a mile. subtle influence which spreads from a dead man so that even the dumb beasts feel and acknowledge it, and this atmosphere of horror had spread out he's a bit of good stuff and hardthrough the ranch house in spite of the men's reticence.

The women knew, though they asked no questions. Their eyes counted the men as they gathered for their morning meal; but if they guessed they said nothing.

Indeed, scarcely a word passed be tween them until the men gathered in the long room after the meal, and even then for a while no one spoke. Though for the moment the besieged were unmolested, everyone knew that the ring which surrounded them was intact, and their destruction but question of hours.

"The men had better sleep watches during the day. Jim. shall want all hands on guard to-night, if Toma does not bring help before then . Horsely and his posse could hardly get through by daylight if they

Jim made no reply. "Don't you think that they will get

here to-day?" In spite of his courage there was a shake in Rolt's voice which he could not hide. For himself be cared little, but the thought of the sweet woman who was all the world to him broke the strong man's nerve.

"It's no good fooling ourselves, fers. Rolt, any longer. No, I don't think any of our messengers are alive to-

The younger Fairclough turned very white, but he pulled himself together, and laughed bravely.

"You don't know my brother, Combe. There's no fear that any pack hottle I was better. I conkinued its of niggers will wipe him out." "I hope not. He is a good man and gotten several neighbors to take Vi-I daresay that you are right, in which nol with the same result." case we shall have help before night- We know the great power of Vinol. fall, but we must not calculate upon our delicious cod liver and iron ton-that. We've calculated too much on ic without oil, in building up all such things already. We've got to do weakened, run-down persons, and for

somethings for ourselves now, right chronic coughs, colds and pulmonary "That's talking," assented Al, "and that is why we guaranted him the two of hearts, there's only one thing as we can do." the two-spot! She couldn't have drawed a larger of the two-spot! "Shoot the women, and die fighting.

mollow, and she herself a very worn and wistful shadow of the spoiled darling of the ranch; in the other woman the strain had only emphasized every brave line in her clear-cut face made firmer the curve of her sweet lips, and given depth to her fearless

was the pride without which love is

"You know what we are going to do. Mary, and you know that I am cutting with the rest?" "Of course. You could do nething else. I will cut first for you, Dick.

Lowest deals, of course?" She had cast the cards on the table, and now stood facing the men a tall, slight figure, as calm to all out ward seeming as if this were but th advantage of bringing the issue plainbeginning of a game of bridge.

"Yes, ma'am. Lowest deals, as yo say," replied Al, with a great smile in his deep wrinkles, and under his "There's only one way. The Indians breath he muttered: through that ring he'd have a clear

"Holy smoke, ain't she a peach?" "Ace high?" "Ace high it is."

"Then I cut for my husband. Who ever cuts the lowest card makes the

For a moment her eyes rested on Dick Rolt, and perhaps her lips trem-Boss, we'd most as well take a turn bled-they are the only part of the face which no one can control-but if they did, it was so slightly that no one in the room could have sworn to at it, and if she sat down somewhat suddenly when she had turned up the knave of diamonds, she had reason replied Al. "We should have had a enough to be tired, and the room was good show last night, but the fog has hot. At once Jim, Al, and Anstruther

ing in broad daylight, our people Rolt held up her hand. shoot too straight, and the Injuns "In order of precedence, please, know it, but they'll do mighty little gentlemen." And then with a little sleeping at night. I'd leave that to curl about her lips: "Our guest comes the man as goes. Kin I have that roan first," and young Fairclough came from his corner with somewhat overdone nonchalance and turned a card ignorant of the circumstances, would quickly.

"No luck," he said, as he turned up grizzled old rider was offering his life, a nine. but the color came to the Boss's eyes 'You don't know yet, Mr. Fairclough," she said sweetly. "The fore-

Jim Combe hesitated a moment, and "Pardon, sir, I think you forget," a queer smile spread over his face. where the doctor now was, and if he stakes are not all yours. Volunteers is shot over a smooth surface it is for a forlorn hope should be unmar- not impossible to guess where the ried men. The captain's duty is to low cards will be, the least painted stay by his ship to the last. Al and offering the least resistance, and he Combe have had their turn. You will picked his card carefully.

His rule was justified. The card "Nonsense, boy, you couldn't sit a he chose had only one pip on it, but for a moment his face clouded. Then, "Nor couldn't find his way if he did he smiled again."

"Ace low, you said, Mrs. Rolt?" "I thought that Jim Combe was so it's me," and Combe turned to leave square player," she said, but there was no censure in her tones. "You But Anstruther caught him by the know the rule, Jim. Stand back. Your turn, Al. "No, by heaven, you don't, Combe! "Give me a little 'un, ma'am."

It is for Mr. Rolt to decide. You are She hesitated. It is not pleasant to send an old friend to his death sir? Will you shame me? Is it not and the cards which had been cut whole trouble is my fault. I can ne-"You want me to cut for you, Al?"

ver hold up my head again if you "If the Boss don't mind, ma'am. Rolt nodded to her to humor the There was such a genuine ring of old man, but her hand shook as she entreaty in the young fellow's voice turned up a five of spades. "Oh, Al, I'm so sorry." He understood that, to a man like "Then you ain't got no call to be. Anstruther, there might be worse

It's what I asked for, ain't it, and I mostly asks for what I want," and he "Couldn't we settle it by drawing swung gaily round on his heels t lots? That's what they always do in leave the room. It was Fairclough who spoke, and his elbow, "there is one more to cu

in the impasse to which they had yet." come the suggestion met with some You ain't fit to go, and there ain't any-"If I agree to Mr. Fairclough's sug- thing there no lower than a five."

gestion," said Rolt, seeing that the "There are three lower, Al. If you feeling of the meeting was with the please, Mrs. Rolt." last speaker, "it will only be on the Mrs. Rolt looked up into the quietinderstanding that all draw. I will smiling face, and saw a light in it waive my right to go first if you will which she had never seen before. I was as if Anstruther knew what lay For a few minutes Combe and An- in store for him, and the knowledge struther tried to argue with him, but made him hold his head more proudly.

though the easiest going man in Bri- "He is right, Al. You pledged yourlish Columbia as a rule, Rolt could selves that all should cut. Take your be sufficiently resolute upon occasion, card, Frank." "It ain't no use argufying," said Al, As she spoke Kitty Clifford moved only \$1.00 a box. Come in and get a believed it, and when he met Kitty a rritably. "Seems to me we had ought from her friend's side uncertainly toblanked contrary that if every one hesitating, her lips trembling and her sise was keeping Christmas, he'd put sweet eyes full of unshed tears. n the day hauling gravel. May as

"What is it, Kitty? Do you want to cut for him?" She tried to answer, but no sound came from her parted lips.

Anstruther, asked him to get a pack of "Shall she cut for you, Frank?" When Anstruther had gone to get "Will' you, Miss Clifford-Kitty? and he held out his hand to her. For "Is it any good keeping this from a moment the boy and girl stood there the ladies? They might prevent his hand in hand before that altar of roing if the lot should fall to him. chance, forgetful of the world and reckless of the betraval of their se

It was a strange betrothal, but such Boss. He ain't used to our range yet t seemed to all who saw them. In silence which could be felt, the girl's er nor you think. Let him be and white hand began to move uncertainrive him a fair show. It's five to one ly over the pack, touching a card here against his getting the deal anyway. and another there, as if afraid to But you kin tell the ladies. They choose.

The others had drawn their lots at "Thank you, Al, old friend. I knew once. To them it seemed that minutes elapsed whilst that little hand wandered over the table, and each It was Mary Rolt herself who spoke man prayed in his own fashion that she might choose aright. were talking, with Kitty by her side,

At last, like a child who fears to see whose young beauty was woefully the knife, she shut her eyes, and narred by the str: in of the last few clutching a card, held it up to Anstruther, over whose face a proud smile spread as bright and genuine as daysuch things then, he might have been

struck by the contract between the "Thank you, dear. You have saved two women. A face is after all only my honor. You don't mind if I spoil the window which a soul looks your pack, Mrs. Rolt. I shall want through, so that whereas the pink and this card by and by more than you will," and kissing it, he put it into his white had died from Kitty's soft cheek, the pretty curls lost their soft

But Kitty caught at his hand and cried to him to show it to her. "Another time, dear. alt is the best card in the world for me." "What was it, Frank? Show

me, oh, show it to me!" "Not now, Kitty," and bending down, he kissed her white brow before them all, and with his arm round her waist, half led, half carried, her to Mrs. Rolt. "Take her away now. For God's

sake take her away!" he said, and Mrs. Rolt led Kitty sobbing from the "Oh, Mary! Mary! I have killed

from the weak pleading bands, and

as the two women left the room, his there was no sign of sorrow. "When the door closed, he sat down on the edge of the table and began

"Let's see that card, pardner. You "No, Al. There it is," and he showtrouble, and that is why we guaran- ed him the two of hearts. couldn't have drawed a lower if she'd.

Geo. W. Mahood, druggist, King tried to!" (To be continued)

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