

PAYS FOR 60 ACRES OF LAND From the Crop of Wheat on 53 Acres in Western Canada.

A Tale of Adventures on an Indian Reservation By Robert Ames Bennett

CHAPTER XXII Continued.

Mumbling an apology, Dupont hastily unfolded the deed, examined through it, and grasped the fact that it purported to convey to him a half-interest in the mine. He had started to read it over more carefully when an oath from Vandervan caused him to look up.

"The younger man pointed along the route back to where the road topped the spur ridge of the butte. "The devil!" he exclaimed. "What brings him back here?"

"Cap! It sure is Cap!" muttered Dupont. "Non d'un chien! You don't think he's got on to the game, do you?" "Wouldn't do him any good if he had."

"Then why'd you think he's—?" "To enter the contest!" cried Vandervan. "There's time enough to get arrested for disobeying orders."

"Hold on!" cautioned Dupont. "What does he do for his luck? In the mountains there ain't no horse nor man neither can break up your pinto come."

"Ain't no chance to it" put in Dupont. "It's a dead chink." "He'll think he's going to do me," exclaimed Vandervan. "I'll register, then. He's come back for the mine first, then Marie. I don't want her to see him or to know he has come back. You are your deed. Suppose you start at once."

"I'll see the willings. I'll see," qualified Dupont. "Look out you don't slip up. I'll tend to my end. So long—good luck!"

He rode off down the butte side of the coulee. Vandervan entered straight across, and met Hardy a few yards below the tent of the commissioners. "Good day, captain," he spoke in civil greeting. "I am surprised to see you back here. Have your orders been countermanded?"

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ing his mare. He gave her no grass and little water but a good allowance of oats. Both morning and afternoon he took her out for short rides up the mountain, and each time repeatedly climbed and descended the creek. He did not cross over to the reservation side, much less go to the agency.

The day set for the opening dawned still and clear, with the promise of burning heat by noon. After breakfast the more uneasy Marie began wandering about the camp or flitting with her packs. Nearly all the older and more experienced men gave their ponies a feed of oats, and stretched out to lounge in the shade of their tents.

Two hours before the time set for the start Vandervan appeared, and riding his pinto and leading a pack pony. When the old prospector saw his heavy pack and shovel and large pack-saddle and ropes, and saw that they cranked many dry jokes on the grand chances of the tenderfoot. Their own packs and shovels were as light as such tools could be made, and not impairing their efficiency, and their packs were as lean as Vandervan's pack was ponderous.

Hardy alone divine the deceptive mockery of his rival's cumbersome display. But he was cumbered by his word and could say nothing. It was he, and not Vandervan, who looked upon with suspicion by the crowd. Soon there was a gathering of a moblike group that rumbled awhile, and ended by presenting itself to Hardy as a committee of inquiry.

"You've been about at this reservation," explained the spokesman. "You ain't got no horse nor man neither can break up your pinto come." "Ain't no chance to it" put in Dupont. "It's a dead chink." "He'll think he's going to do me," exclaimed Vandervan. "I'll register, then. He's come back for the mine first, then Marie. I don't want her to see him or to know he has come back. You are your deed. Suppose you start at once."

"The same is true of several among you," Hardy rejoined. "One of the cowboys who was included in this remark called back resentfully: 'You've been about at this reservation, you ain't got no horse nor man neither can break up your pinto come.'"

"The commissioners came down from the agency before in time to register their identification of the contestants. All of them, but Hardy and Vandervan identified themselves and hurried over to the end of the line. There was a scant five minutes' waiting. Vandervan was a quiver with eager excitement, and made no attempt to conceal the same. He smiled and waved his hand to the commissioner, who turned to him with sparkling eyes. There was no anxiety or envy or malice in his look.

"The signal line of contestants wavered and plunged forward to the shallow stream. There were, however, quite enough lusty ones to raise a wild splash and turmoil, as whooping and yelling, they spurred their ponies through the water and whirled away at a gallop. Some wheeled up the coulee, and some turned back at the steep bank. Vandervan, wild-eyed and noiseless, all headed downstream for the road, spurting his mare. He was followed by a large bunch.

Hardy started after these last, holding his mare to her usual steady trot. When he came up to the head of the gulley, those who had gone before him were all quite a distance away. He was still in the valley and the agency, the long-striding mare began to pass ponies whose riders had turned to their whirling start. Others were still loitering in swirlt purr of Vandervan's.

Hardy walked the mare up the slope of the agency terrace. He saw nothing of Dupont or Marie, and the Indians were all away with their tents. He caught a glimpse of two Indian policemen removing the load from the horse. He put the mare into a gallop. All the way to the head of the valley, Hardy held to the head of the line. After another, he passed the remaining leaders. The best of the ponies were all in the lead with the big tough-looking mare. At last only Vandervan was about. As Hardy overhauled and forged past him, Vandervan, the yoke fellow turned

Hardy had his reward for his restraint. The resilient stride of the mare as she came back into a full gallop around the long, easy slopes, around a curving mountain side, and along the level bench of a stream bank, she held the crowd on the easy mountain slope at a steady jog.

Two minutes brought him over the summit to the sharp pitch above the terrace. He stared down at the terrace several moments, however, before he made out the figures of a man and woman waiting at the first turn of the trail. There could be no doubt that the two were Marie and her father.

Hardy had no less certain that Vandervan had not yet arrived. Even had he suspected his opponent's stratagem, he scarcely could have covered the seven miles of trail in an short a time as Hardy had taken to make the three miles across country.

The two watchers never thought to look about and up the mountain. They had not yet looked about when he came down upon the crest of the spur. A large, newly cut stake gave him a hint where one of the upper corners of the claim should be located. He cut his own stake, drove it, and tucked one of his legal notices. Another stake he drove at the upper corner, and he swiftly returned the making of his own stake and posting of the notice to the end of the trail.

At the curb of the mine shaft he posted another notice. He was now in plain view from the cabin, but out of the sight of the other riders on the trail. On the terrace as he was walking the third stake into a bed of loose rocks he heard an angry exclamation which he recognized as that of Marie. He had come around the end of the trail.

Hardy did not reply nor did he attempt to force a passage. At last, however, the rider on the pinto, with a heart-breaking race, came the opportunity for which he had been waiting. The trail smoothed out in another place. He reined back, and held the mare in hand. He started at a canter, and gradually let her loose. He was examining his rifle as she came, and he was looking at his first view of the broken mountain and the ridge-side where Redber had made the second attempt at the summit. As he looked at the shattered summit, his forehead flashed. He thrust the rifle back into its sheath, and drew the mare down to a walk.

Behind him he heard a muffled drumming of unshod hoofs. Vandervan was coming up at a gallop. A second attempt at the summit. As he looked at the shattered summit, his forehead flashed. He thrust the rifle back into its sheath, and drew the mare down to a walk.

Hardy made no attempt to "get the best" of his opponent. He had already started to advance upon Vandervan at a quick, deliberate pace, his hands hanging empty at his sides, his face as pale as a mare's. "Put down that gun!" he commanded.

Vandervan was leveling the rifle. He took aim straight between Hardy's eyes. His finger kissed the trigger. The slightest twitch would have sent the bullet crashing through Hardy's forehead. He started to Christen or hesitancy on Hardy's part would have caused that twitch. He was looking dead in the face. Vandervan was on his opponent.

Hardy took the step above an unshod hoof. He reined back, and held the mare in hand. He started at a canter, and gradually let her loose. He was examining his rifle as she came, and he was looking at his first view of the broken mountain and the ridge-side where Redber had made the second attempt at the summit. As he looked at the shattered summit, his forehead flashed. He thrust the rifle back into its sheath, and drew the mare down to a walk.

As an outcome of medical inspection of school-children, people are beginning to appreciate the value of the physical development of the young. M. V. O'Brien, statistician of deformities of growth, has been compiled in a number of American cities, and they are impressive. A large proportion of school children are afflicted with curvature of the spine. This deformity becomes more common as we go up the grades and into the college years.

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