

# MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING  
ADVENTURE

MOTOR  
FICTION

NO. 4  
MAR. 20, 1909

FIVE  
CENTS

MOTOR MATE'S  
RACE

THE LAST FLIGHT  
OF THE COMET

STANLEY R. HARTMAN'S



As the man in the blue jacket stepped down from the large circular structure, he reached out and shook hands with the man on the bicycle, who was wearing a green cap and goggles.

Stanley R. Hartman  
Illustrator

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## MOTOR MATT'S RACE

or

The Last Flight of the "Comet"

By Stanley R Matthews

*Street & Smith*  
*Publishers — New York*

© 1909 (unrenewed) and re-published in 2016.

# MOTOR STORIES

THRILLING ADVENTURE MOTOR FICTION

*Issued Weekly. By subscription \$2.50 per year. Copyright, 1909,  
by Street & Smith, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.*

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**No. 4.**      NEW YORK, March, 20, 1909.      **Price Five Cents.**

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## Motor Matt's Race

OR,

THE LAST FLIGHT OF THE  
"COMET."

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# CHARACTERS THAT APPEAR IN THIS STORY.

**Matt King**, concerning whom there has always been a mystery—a lad of splendid athletic abilities, and never-failing nerve, who has won for himself, among the boys of the Western town, the popular name of "Mile-a-minute Matt."

**Chub McReady**, sometimes called plain "Reddy," for short, on account of his fiery "thatch"—a chum of Matt, with a streak of genius for inventing things that often land the bold experimenter in trouble.

**Welcome Perkins**, a one-legged wanderer who lives with Chub and his sister while their father prospects for gold—Welcome is really a man of peace, yet he delights to imagine himself a "terror," and is forever boasting about being a "reformed road-agent."

**Tom Clipperton**, known generally as "Clip," a quarter-blood, who is very sensitive about his Indian ancestry.

**McKibben**, the sheriff who has both nerve and intelligence.

**Fresnay**, a cowboy who performs some mighty queer stunts.

**Pima Pete**, an Indian to whom Clip is related.

**Hogan,**  
**Leffingwell,**        } two deputy sheriffs.

**Short**, a lawyer.

**Burke**, sheriff of an adjoining county.

**Jack Moody**, an engineer friend of Chub.

# CHAPTER I.

## TROUBLE ON THE ROAD.

"Ye're afeared! Yah, that's what ye are! Motor Matt's scared, an' I never thought ye was afeared o' nothin'. Go ahead! I dare ye!"

An automobile—a high-powered roadster—was nosing along through the hills a dozen miles out of the city of Phoenix. The vehicle had the usual two seats in front and a rumble-seat behind—places for three, but there were four piled aboard.

Matt King was in the driver's seat, of course, and equally, of course, he had to have the whole seat to himself. On his left were Chub McReady and Tom Clipperton, sitting sideways and wedged into their places like sardines in a can. In the rumble behind was the gentleman with the wooden leg—Welcome Perkins, the "reformed road-agent."

Matt was giving his friends a ride. The red roadster, in which they were taking the spin, was an unclaimed car at present in the custody of McKibben, the sheriff. It had been used for lawless work by its original owners, and had fallen into the hands of the sheriff, who was holding it in the hope that the criminals would come forward and claim it.<sup>[A]</sup>

McKibben and Motor Matt were the best of friends, and McKibben had told Matt to take the red roadster out for "exercise" whenever he felt like it. Directly after dinner, that day, they had started from the McReady home in Phoenix. It was now about half-past one, and they were jogging at a leisurely pace through the foot-hills.

[A] See Motor Matt Weekly, No. 3, "Motor Matt's 'Century' Run; or, The Governor's Courier."

Welcome, on account of his wooden leg and the necessity of having plenty of room, had been given the rumble-seat. He was standing up most of the time, however, leaning over the back of the seat in front of him, and telling Motor Matt how to drive the car.

That was the third time the old man had ever been in an automobile, but to hear him talk you'd have thought there wasn't anything about the machine that was new to him. His constant clamor was for more speed, and Matt had no intention of taking chances with a borrowed car when a leisurely pace was entirely satisfactory to himself and his two chums, Clip and Chub.

"Oh, slush!" grunted Chub, as Welcome leaned forward and dared Motor Matt to "hit er up." "You'd be scared to death, Welcome, if Matt put on full speed and hit only a high place here and there. Sit down an' shut up, or we'll drop you into the road. I wouldn't mind having that seat of yours myself; eh, Clip?"

"Free kentry, ain't it?" snapped Welcome. "You ain't got no call ter sot down on me, Chub McReady, if I want to talk. Go on," he added to Matt; "pull the plug out o' the carburetter an' hit the magneto a lick jest fer luck."

This was a sample of Welcome's knowledge. Chub let off a delighted yell.

"Yes," he laughed, "an' while you're about it, Matt, strip the planetary transmission an' short-circuit the spark-plug. Give Welcome all he wants! Make him sit down, hang on with both hands and bite hard on his store-teeth."

"When you're running a car that don't belong to you, fellows," said Matt, "it's best to be on the safe side."



"Sure," agreed Clip. "We're going fast enough. No need to rush things."

"Ye're all afeared!" taunted Welcome. "Snakes alive, I could walk a heap faster'n what we're goin'. D'ruther walk, enough sight, if ye ain't goin' any faster'n this. This here ottermobill is an ole turtle. I hadn't ort ter brag about it, but when I was young an' lawless, I was that swift I could hold up a stage, then ride twenty miles an' hold up another, an' clean up the operation complete inside of an hour."

"It wasn't much of a day for hold-ups, either," spoke up Chub gravely.

"Anyways, that's what I done, Smarty," snorted Welcome, "but I didn't use no ottermobill—jest a plain hoss with four legs."

"Must have had six legs," said Clip. "Couldn't have gone that fast on a horse with only four."

"Now *you* butt in," snarled Welcome. "Goin' to put the clutch on the cylinders, Matt," he added, "an' advance the spark a couple o' feet? If y'ain't, I'm goin' to git out an' walk home. It's only five hours till supper, an' we must be all o' twelve miles from town."

"You see, Welcome," explained Matt, with a wink at Chub and Clip, "it wouldn't do to put the clutch on the cylinders, for I'd strip the gear; and if I advanced the spark more'n a foot I'd burn out the carburetter."

"D'ye reckon I didn't know that?" demanded Welcome indignantly. "Why, I kin fergit more about these here ottermobill's in a minit than some fellers knows in a year. But, say! What's that thing off to the side o' the road? Looks like a Gila monster."

All three of the boys turned their eyes swiftly to the roadside. The next instant Welcome had leaned far over, gripped the long lever at Matt's side and shoved

it as far as he could.

They had been on the low gear; that put them on the high with a jump, and the red roadster flung madly ahead.

Matt shifted his eyes from the side of the road just in time to see Welcome sail out of the rumble, turn a half somersault and land, astonished, in a sitting posture in the road.

Both Chub and Clip had had a scare, the sudden plunge of the machine having made them grab each other, and they only missed going over the side by a hair's breadth.

As quickly as he could, Matt brought the lever to an upright position and pressed the primary foot-brake.

"The old freak!" shouted Chub, as the car came to a halt. "He came within one of putting the lot of us overboard. If he had two good legs, I'm a farmer if we wouldn't make him walk back to town for that!"

"If he don't agree to sit quiet in the rumble and enjoy the scenery," said Matt, "we'll make him walk, anyway. I won't allow any one to mix up with the machinery as long as I'm doing the driving."

Welcome must have received quite a jolt. For a second or two he acted as though he were dazed; then he slowly gathered in his hat, got upright and shook his fist at those in the car.

"Dad-bing!" he yelled. "Ye done it a-purpose, ye know ye did."

"Well, what do you think of that!" muttered Chub.

"Ye jest coaxed me out in that ole buzz-wagon ter hev fun with me," ranted Welcome. "Wonder ye didn't break my neck, 'r somethin'. I hit the trail harder'n a brick house, an' if I wasn't as springy as injy-rubber I'd

hev been scattered all around here like a Chinese puzzle."

"Come on, Welcome!" called Matt. "But you've got to keep still and keep away from the machinery if you want to ride with us."

"Wouldn't ride in that ole cross between a kitchen stove an' a hay-rack fer a hunderd dollars a minit!" fumed Welcome. "I've stood all I'm a-goin' to. Ye've stirred up my lawlessness a-plenty, an' I'm goin' to hide out beside the road an' hold up the Montezuma stage when it comes through. Ye'll hear about it tonight, in town, an' then ye'll be sorry ye treated me like ye done. If ye got bizness any place else, hit yer ole gasoline-tank a welt an' don't let me detain ye a minit."

Rubbing the small of his back and muttering to himself, the old man started along the road in the direction of town.

"Let him walk a spell," said Chub in a low tone. "He wants us to coax him to get back in; let's make him think we're taking him at his word."

"All right," laughed Matt, who knew the eccentric old man as well as anybody, "we'll lag along into the hills for a mile or two, and then come back. I guess Welcome will be glad enough to get in by that time."

Chub got out and scrambled into the rumble. The machine took the spark without cranking and the red roadster started off.

"So-long, Perk!" shouted Chub hilariously, standing up in the rumble and waving his hand. "Tell Susie, when you get home, that we'll straggle in by supper-time."

The old man never looked around, but the way he stabbed the ground with his wooden pin showed how he felt.

Perhaps half a mile from the place where Welcome had left the car the boys met a horseman riding at speed in the direction of town. The man drew rein for an instant.

"Turn around!" he yelled; "p'int the other way! Can't ye hear 'em. Thar's a stampede on, an' a thousand head o' cattle aire tearin' this way like an express-train! Listen! If ye don't hike, they'll run right over ye!"

Startled exclamations escaped the boys. The cowboy's manner, quite as much as his words, aroused their alarm.

The trail, for several miles in that particular part of the hills, was walled in on both sides by high, steep ground. This made a sort of chute of the road, so that those in charge of the cattle would not be able to get ahead of them and turn them.

Having given his warning and done what he could, the cowboy used his spurs and dashed on. At that moment a rumble of falling hoofs reached the ears of the boys, accompanied by the *click, click* of knocking horns and a frenzied bellowing.

"Turn 'er, quick!" whooped Chub.

But the command was unnecessary. Motor Matt with a firm hand and a steady brain, was already manipulating the red roadster, backing and forging ahead in order to get faced the other way in the cramped space.

Meanwhile the ominous sounds, which came from around the base of a hill where the road described a sharp bend, had been growing in volume.

Just as the roadster jumped away on the back stretch the cattle began pouring around the foot of the hill.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE STAMPEDE.

It was the custom of the ranchers to keep their cattle in the hills until they were nearly ready for market, then drive them down into Salt River Valley, turn them into the alfalfa-fields and let them fatten before shipment.

This herd of lean, brown cattle, wild as coyotes, had been started for the grass-lands of the valley. Very little was required to start a panic among them, and this panic had hit them at the very worst place possible on the entire drive.

With heads down, tongues protruding, foam flying from their open mouths, and horns knocking, the frenzied animals hurled themselves onward. Even if the sight of the automobile had frightened them, there could be no turning back for the leaders of the herd, pressed as they were by the charging brutes in the rear. And, of course, the character of the roadside, at that point, prevented any turning out or scattering.

All that lay between the boys and destruction was the speed of the car. If a tire blew up, or if anything went wrong with the machinery, the tidal wave of cattle would roll on over the car and its passengers.

"We're in fer it, fellers!" shouted Chub, who was in a good position to note the full extent of the danger.

There was no hanging back on Motor Matt's part. He was on the high speed, and caressing the throttle-lever as he steered.

"We're leaving 'em behind!" announced Clip. "Keep it up, Matt."

The red roadster was not only leaving the frightened herd behind, but was coming up with the cowboy, hand over fist.

"We'll have to slow down!" called Matt, between his clenched teeth, his flashing gray eyes straight ahead; "if we don't, we'll run over the man on the horse."

Just then they turned a bit of an angle that gave them a glimpse of Welcome Perkins. Faint sounds of the uproar behind had reached the old man. Planted in the middle of the road, he was staring back, wondering, no doubt, why the horseman was tearing along at such a rate of speed, and why the red roadster was letting itself out on the back track. But the old man was not kept long in doubt. Through the haze of dust back of the automobile he saw the plunging cattle.

The next moment he went straight up in the air with a terrified yell and made a dash for the side of the road. As fate would have it, the road at that point was hemmed in with banks too steep to be scaled; nevertheless, Welcome clawed frantically at the rocks.

"Stand whar ye are!" roared the cowboy. "I'll take ye up with me."

Welcome's peril struck wild alarm to the hearts of the boys. They realized that if they had insisted on the old man getting into the car he would not now be in that terrible predicament.

In order to get Welcome up behind him the cowboy had to throw himself back on the bit and bring the horse to a quick halt. He leaned down to help Welcome up, and Welcome, who was almost as frenzied as the steers, gave a wild jump and grabbed saddle-horn and cantle. Under his weight, and the weight of the cowboy, which was temporarily thrown on the same side, the saddle turned. Welcome dropped into the road, and his would be rescuer pitched on top of him.

The horse, thoroughly frightened, jumped away and continued his breakneck pace down the road.

Yells of consternation went up from Chub and Clip. Matt had been obliged to bring the car almost to a halt while the cowboy was trying to pick up Welcome. The leaders of the stampeding herd had come dangerously close.

"They're on us!" whooped Chub despairingly; "we're all done for!"

"Not yet," shouted Matt, sending the car ahead toward the place where Welcome and the cowboy were scrambling to their feet. "Take 'em both aboard! Quick on it, now, and we'll get away."

The car rumbled up abreast of the two in the road.

"Jump in!" shouted Clip; "hustle!"

Welcome threw himself into the front of the car and the cowboy made a flying leap for the rumble. Clip grabbed one and Chub caught the other. By then the foremost of the steers were almost nosing the rear of the car.

Matt, without losing an instant, threw the lever clear over, and the roadster flung away like an arrow from a bow, on the high speed; then, a second later, he opened the throttle and the six purring cylinders sent the car along at a gait that was double that of the pursuing cattle.

"Wow!" panted Welcome, who had both arms around Clip and was hanging to him like grim death. "Keep holt o' me! I feel like every minute was goin' to be my next! Slow down a leetle, can't ye? If ye don't we'll be upside down in the ditch! Whoosh! I'd ruther take chances with them steers than ridin' a streak o' lightnin' like this. Br-r-r!"

Welcome was getting all the fast riding he wanted. The red roadster whipped and slewed around the curves, and leaped like lightning across the straight-away stretches. Matt, cool as a summer day and as steady as a clock, had eyes and ears for nothing but that terrible flight.

Two minutes sufficed to bring the car out of the hills and onto the level plains.

"All right, pard!" cried Chub from the rear; "slow down, now, whenever you please. The cowboys have got ahead of the herd and the leaders are beginning to mill."

Matt slowed the pace to a ten-mile gait, and Welcome, with a gasp of relief, dropped in a limp huddle.

"Shade o' Gallopin' Dick!" he mumbled, pulling a sleeve across his dripping forehead. "I've been in snug corners a-plenty durin' my hootin', tootin' career, but dadbinged if I ever had a closter call than this here. When I uster ride," he added, with a sour look at the cowboy in the rumble, "fellers useter know how to cinch up their saddles so'st they *stay*."

"The givin' way o' that saddle," returned the cowboy, "was the best thing that ever happened to us. If I'd got you aboard that cayuse, Peg-leg, them cattle would hev nipped us, sure. The boss never could hev carried double an' got us out o' the way. This here devil-wagon," he finished, addressing the boys, "sartinly saved our scalps. I'm obliged ter ye fer what ye done."

"Where do those cattle belong?" asked Chub.

"To the Fiddleback outfit, same as me. I'm Josh Fresnay, an' I'm ridin' to town with the ole man's check fer ten thousand in gold ter pay off at the ranch. Got ter git ter the bank by three o'clock, 'r I won't be able



ter git the money. I kin sojer back at any ole time ter-night, jest so'st the boys kin git their hooks on the dinero in the mornin'."

Chub introduced himself, Matt, Clip, and Welcome.

"Ye don't mean ter say," cried Fresnay, "that it's Motor Matt himself that made this devil-wagon cut that hole in the air?"

"Sure it is," laughed Chub. "Put him behind a motor an' you can bet your spurs there's somethin' doing."

"Waal, I reckon!" returned Fresnay enthusiastically. "Blamed few fellers in this part o' the kentry hev'n't heerd o' Motor Matt. He's the one that ketched Dangerfield, the feller that was smugglin' Chinks inter the kentry, an' helped Burke, the Prescott sher'f, wind up the gang. Shore I've heerd o' Motor Matt. Put 'er thar, son!" and Fresnay leaned over the back of the seat and offered Matt his hand.

The young motorist laughed as he gave the cowboy's hand a cordial shake.

"It's easy to get talked about, Fresnay," said he.

"That's right!" declared the cowboy. "Rob a bank, er save a gal from gittin' run over by a train—almost anythin'll do ter make yer name a household word. Now, as fer me—"

The cowboy broke off his remarks with a long whistle. He was standing in the rumble, holding himself upright by gripping the back of the two front seats. His eyes, traveling along the trail over the heads of Matt and Clip, had seen something which aroused his surprise and gratification.

"Waal, great horn spoons!" he cried. "If thar ain't Ole Beeswax, that cayuse o' mine, I'm a sinner! I'll be hornswoggled if I ain't playin' in luck, this trip. I'll be

able ter git out now, McReady," he added to Chub, "an' give ye a leetle more room."

Some distance away the horse was being held in the road. A tall man had the animal by the bridle. The man had a swarthy face, was roughly dressed, wore moccasins, and had evidently been footing it along the trail.

As the red roadster came closer, Matt stared at the man keenly, and a muttered exclamation escaped his lips. As he brought the car to a halt, Matt's gaze swerved to Clip.

Clip's eyes were like smoldering coals, and he was sitting rigidly erect.

"Feller looks like a half-breed," murmured Welcome Perkins. "Got all the earmarks o' one. Seein' as how he was travelin' afoot, it strikes me as some remarkable he didn't h'ist himself inter the saddle an' ride off with that hoss. Half-breeds, as a rule, ain't got much regard fer other folk's property. Mebby he was intendin' to. I see he's got the saddle back on top o' the hoss."

Fresnay tumbled out of the car and walked over to the half-breed.

"Hello, neighbor!" he called. "I see ye've caught up my hoss. He got away from me back there in the hills."

The half-breed grunted, swept his eyes over the cowboy and then over those in the car, and stepped forward to lay the reins in Fresnay's hand.

"Heap easy to ketch um," said he.

Clip and Chub got out to stretch their legs. Welcome gurgled delightedly as he sprawled himself in Clip's seat. Matt continued to watch the half-breed, but covertly.

Fresnay fished a silver dollar out of his pocket.

"I ain't got much dinero about my clothes, neighbor," he observed, "but here's a cart-wheel fer yer trouble."

The half-breed grabbed the dollar, spun it in the air, caught it as it came down, then slipped it into his pocket. As he drew out his hand, Matt saw something in it that looked like a folded paper—perhaps a note. The half-breed tried to conceal the paper in his palm, and Matt believed that he was the only one in the party who saw it.

While Fresnay was climbing to the back of the horse, the half-breed, tossing Matt a significant look, brushed past Clip and tucked the folded paper into his hand with a quick, stealthy movement, then whirled, left the trail and strode quickly away. Clip, his eyes still burning and with a strange look crossing his face, hid the paper deftly in the pocket of his coat.

"Never did like a half-breed nohow," grunted Welcome. "They ain't ter be depended on, an' I makes it a rule to walk around 'em just as I would a rattler."

Clip shot a glance of angry defiance at the garrulous old man. For the moment Welcome had forgotten that Clip was a quarter-blood, himself.

## CHAPTER III.

### CLIP'S NOTE.

"Mighty unsociable, that feller," laughed the cowboy, staring after the vanishing form of the half-breed. "Waal," he added, "it was wuth a heap more'n a dollar ter hev him corral Ole Beeswax. You boys'll beat me inter Phoenix, easy enough, but I got time ter jog along an' git thar by three. I'm a powerful obliged ter ye fer what ye done, an' if ever any o' ye need a friend, jest call on Josh Fresnay. So-long."

Chub and Clip had climbed back into the car. All the boys shouted their good-bys to Fresnay, and, after Matt had "cranked up," the car sped away in the direction of Phoenix.

Clip was silent and preoccupied, and Matt attended quietly to his work of driving the car; but his thoughts were busy. While Welcome jabbered in his usual strain, and Chub flung back an occasional answer, Matt's mind circled about the half-breed and the note.

Matt had recognized the half-breed at the first glance. He was none other than Pima Pete, and he was an uncle of Clip's. But, what was infinitely worse, Pete had been a member of a gang of smugglers headed by the notorious Dangerfield. With a few others, Pima Pete had escaped at the time Dangerfield and most of his gang had been captured. A reward of \$1,000 each had been offered for the apprehension of every member of the lawless outfit, and this offer still held good so far as Pima Pete was concerned.

That note which had been smuggled into Clip's hand must have been of a good deal of importance, or Pima Pete would not have run the risk of capture in order to

deliver it.

When the boys reached town, Clip got out of the car at the point nearest the place where he roomed, in the Mexican quarter. Chub and Welcome were still in the car, and Clip merely gave Matt a significant look as he waved a good-by. Matt knew that Clip must be anxious to read the note and find out what his uncle had to say to him.

Chub and Welcome got out in front of their home, and stood for a moment beside the car.

"You've shut up like a clam, pard," remarked Chub, with a curious look at Matt. "What's the matter? Anything gone crossways?"

"What makes you think that, Chub?" laughed Matt. "Don't a fellow ever do a little head-work except when things go crossways?"

"Everybody ain't shootin' off his mouth the hull blessed time like you, Chub," put in Welcome. "Whenever you talk it's like a lot o' words rattlin' in a gourd. Now, Matt an' me's some diff'rent. By keepin' mum fer a while, we allers hev somethin' to say whenever we talk."

"Police!" grinned Chub. "Why, Perk, you garrulous old parrot, you can talk more and say less than any man in Arizona. When'll you be around again, Matt?"

"Oh, I'll drop in on you to-morrow, some time. So-long!"

Matt returned the red roadster to McKibben's barn, where it was being kept, cleaned it up a little and made sure that everything was all right, then locked the barn door and left the key with Mrs. McKibben.

It was probably half-past four when he reached his boarding-place. As soon as he had dusted his clothes,

and paid his respects to the wash-bowl, he dropped into a chair and fell to thinking, once more, about Clip, Pima Pete, and the note.

He had an idea that that note meant trouble for Clip. It was a vague sort of feeling, but strong enough to make Matt uncomfortable.

Pima Pete had been a lawbreaker, and there was a reward out for him. Being a relative of Clip's, the half-breed was safe so far as Clip and Matt were concerned, but if any one who knew Pima Pete happened to see Clip with him, there might be no end of trouble.

Thoroughly dissatisfied with the course events were taking, and not a little worried, Matt went down to supper and sat through a half hour of incessant clatter from his landlady, Mrs. Spooner. When he got up from the table he had decided to find Clip at once and get at the contents of Pima Pete's note. He went to his room after his hat, and when he opened the door there was Clip in a rocking-chair by the window. The quarter-blood had slipped into the house and up-stairs to the room while Matt had been eating his supper.

"Why, hello, old chap!" exclaimed Matt. "I was just thinking about hunting you up."

"Hist!" warned Clip. "Not so loud, Matt. Maybe I shouldn't have come here. But I felt as though I just *had* to talk with you."

Matt was "stumped." Nevertheless, he was not slow in guessing that Pima Pete's note had something to do with Clip's mysterious manner.

"What's wrong, Clip?" queried Matt, lowering his voice and setting a chair closer to his chum.

"Matter enough. You saw what happened. When the cowboy got back his horse, I mean."

"Pima Pete gave you a note."

"That's it. Not much gets away from you, Matt. I was afraid Chub and Perkins might have seen it, too."

"They didn't. I could swear to that."

"You remember what Dangerfield said when he was captured? That there was something he wanted you to do?"

Matt knitted his brows. He had not forgotten that.

"I remember it, Clip," said he; "and I remember, too, that I was to hear about the work through Pima Pete."

"Well, Pima Pete came to me. We're of the same blood, as you know." As usual, whenever he mentioned his mixed blood, a savage defiance blazed in Clip's face. "I reckon that's why Pete came to me. It would be easy for any one who knew him to give him away."

"I wouldn't do that—on your account, Clip."

"Sure you wouldn't. I know that. But Pima Pete don't. He saw us going into the hills in the automobile. Then he wrote that note and waited for us to come back. He didn't dare enter the town. And he was taking chances, as it was. If that cowboy had happened to know him, Pete's game would have been up."

"Did he tell you in the note about seeing us, and waiting for us to come back, Clip?" asked Matt.

Clip nodded.

"Where's the note?"

"I burned it. Got to be on the safe side, Matt. Pima Pete's my uncle. I can't take any chances. Are you willing to try what Dangerfield wants done?"

"If it's honest work, and I can help anybody by doing it, yes. But Dangerfield was a lawbreaker, and I'd have

to know all about the business before I took any hand in it."

"There's ten thousand dollars in gold buried in the hills. It's cached near where Pete met us. Pete wants us to meet him out there to-night and get the gold. It's Dangerfield's. Pete says Dangerfield earned it honestly. Dangerfield's father is an old man, and lives in Emmetsburg, Iowa. We're to send six thousand dollars to Emmetsburg, and Pete, and you, and I are to divide the rest. That's the work."

Clip's keen eyes were fixed on Matt's troubled face. Matt was thinking hard and did not answer.

"You don't like the work!" muttered Clip.

"I don't, and that's a fact, Clip," returned Matt. "That may be honest money, but how do we know? Why didn't Dangerfield tell the sheriff and let *him* dig it up?"

"The sheriff would turn it over to the prosecuting attorney. The government would confiscate it. You see, the federal lawyer would think it money Dangerfield got for smuggling Chinamen over the border."

"Well," said Matt decisively, "if we fooled with that money we'd be apt to get our fingers burned. Besides, it isn't a good thing to tangle up with Pima Pete. He's better off, and so are we, if we keep apart."

A dark frown settled on Clip's swarthy face. For several minutes he bent his head thoughtfully.

"Pete has to get his part of the money," said Clip finally. "He can't get away to Mexico until he has it."

"If he knows where it is," suggested Matt, "he could take it all."

"Yes—if he was an out-and-out thief." Clip threw back his head and squared his shoulders. "He didn't



reckon there was any harm helping Dangerfield run a few Chinks across the border. A whole lot of people think the same way."

"That may be, Clip," answered Matt kindly, "but there's a law against it, and Dangerfield and his men broke the law. That's put Dangerfield in a hole, and it would put Pima Pete in a hole, too, if the officers knew he was skulking around near Phoenix. Take my advice, Clip," Matt added earnestly, dropping a hand on his chum's knee. "Keep away from Pete, just now. Let him dig up the gold and send some of it to Emmetsburg. There's no need of ringing you and me in on the deal."

"You don't understand, Matt. Pete don't dare show himself anywhere. If you and I don't mix up with that gold, nothing will be done with it."

Matt puzzled his brain over the problem for several minutes.

"I'll tell you, Clip," said he finally, "you meet your uncle to-night, but do it carefully—understand? Be sure no one sees you. Let him tell you right where the gold is, and let him take a thousand of it, if he has to have it, and clear out. In two or three days, when your uncle has had time to get into Mexico, I'll go to Governor Gaynor, lay the whole matter before him, and ask his advice. If he says for us to do what Dangerfield wants, we'll do it. That's the best course. But don't you be with Pima Pete a minute longer than you have to."

Once more Clip bowed his head. While he was thinking the matter over a rap fell on the door.

Starting up quickly, Clip laid a finger on his lips, moved softly across the room and into a closet, pulling the door partly shut after him.

All this secrecy of Clip's Matt did not think at all

necessary; but Clip was a queer fellow, although a fine one at heart, and doubly queer whenever anything connected with his ancestry came up.

There was no time to argue with him, however, and Matt stepped to the door and threw it open.

McKibben, the sheriff, stepped into the room.

## CHAPTER IV.

### M'KIBBEN'S TIP.

"Howdy, Matt!" cried McKibben. "Just dropped in to see you on a little matter of business. Mrs. Spooner wanted to come up and announce me, but I told her that wasn't necessary. Know where Tom Clipperton is?"

This point blank question struck Matt "all of a heap." If there was one thing he hated more than another it was a lie. Only a coward will side-step the truth. However, Matt couldn't very well tell McKibben that Clip was in the closet, and he didn't see how he could refuse to answer McKibben's question without arousing his suspicions. Fortunately, the official did not wait very long for Matt to reply.

"I've just come from the place where Clipperton boards," said he, "and he wasn't there. I can have a little talk with you, though, and maybe it will do just as well."

Matt and McKibben were very good friends, and the sheriff dropped into the chair recently vacated by Clip.

"What's happened, Mr. McKibben?" queried Matt. "Has some one turned up to claim that red roadster?"

"No, and I don't believe any one ever will. The fellows who own that car know when to let well enough alone. What I want to see you about, Matt, is an altogether different matter, although the roadster is indirectly concerned. You were out this afternoon with Clipperton, McReady, and Perkins, and you got away from a cattle stampede by the skin of your eye-winkers, at the same time saving Josh Fresnay, of the Fiddleback outfit."

"It wasn't much of a getaway," laughed Matt. "When you open that red roadster up she can go about ten feet to a steer's one."

"Of course," returned McKibben, "with a cool head and a steady hand, like yours, there wasn't much danger. Fresnay was telling me about it. He also told me how his horse was stopped by a half-breed, and how he had a notion that the half-breed was Pima Pete, one of Dangerfield's old gang. Fresnay has only seen Pima Pete once or twice, and one half-breed looks a lot like another, anyhow, so Fresnay didn't think very much about it at the time he got his horse back. While he was riding into Phoenix though, he got to turning the matter over in his mind, along with something else he saw, and he got a bit suspicious. As soon as he'd finished his business at the bank he came to see me. I heard what he had to say and went to see Clipperton, but he wasn't at home. Knowing you were a chum of Clipperton's, I headed for here."

Matt was startled, although he tried not to show it. Fresnay was a source of peril for Clip—that point went home to Matt in a twinkling.

"Naturally," resumed the sheriff, taking a whole lot for granted, "you wouldn't know Pima Pete from Adam, but Clip might know him. Anyhow, on the supposition that Fresnay's suspicions were well grounded, I have sent a couple of deputies out into the hills to look for the half-breed; but I'd like a little more information, if I could get it. There's another point, too, which looks a little bit queer, in case Fresnay has got it right. He said he saw the half-breed hand Clipperton something that looked like a scrap of paper. Fresnay may have been wrong in this—I hope he is—for if the half-breed really proves to be Pima Pete, that note business will have an ugly look for your chum. See? What I want you to do, Matt, is to find Clip, if you

can, and send him to me. I've only got the boy's best interests at heart, and I want to talk with him. A little heart-to-heart talk, just now, might save him some trouble."

McKibben got up.

"I reckon that's all," he finished, moving toward the door. "If you can find Clipperton you'll ask him to come and see me?"

"Yes," answered Matt.

Just then he was in a situation that was mighty unpleasant. How was he going to play square with the sheriff and at the same time be loyal to Clipperton? Certainly he could not tell what he knew about Clipperton and Pima Pete.

As soon as the sheriff had gone, and the front door of the house had closed behind him, Clip emerged from the closet. His face was set and stern as he confronted Matt.

"Fresnay has made much trouble!" muttered Clip. "He recognized my uncle. And he saw him smuggle that note into my hand. More than that, two deputies are in the hills looking for Pima Pete."

Clip scowled his dissatisfaction over the prospect.

"You can see, old chap," said Matt, "what it means to tangle up with Pima Pete in this business of Dangerfield's. Cut Pima Pete out. It isn't safe for you to have anything more to do with him."

"*You* needn't, Matt. You can't, after this. But I've got to. Pima Pete's my uncle. Blood's thicker than water, even if it *is* Indian blood." The fiercely resentful look gleamed in Clip's eyes. "Pima Pete came here on Dangerfield's business. But for that, he'd have been across the border and safe by now. I'll see him to-night

and warn him to clear out."

"Clip," said Matt, in a low, earnest tone, "if you'll take my advice you won't go near Pima Pete, but you'll go to the sheriff and make a clean breast of the whole thing."

Clip made a gesture of savage dissent.

"If it was *your* uncle," said he, with a bitter note in his voice, "you'd see this thing differently. Suppose Pima Pete's captured and brought in here. Suppose it becomes known he's a relative of mine—he, one of Dangerfield's gang!" Clip's eyes became points of flame, and his breath came hard and fast. "Why," and his voice was husky and thick with passion as he spoke, "they might try to take me out of the public school and send me to the Indian school. I've—I've stood all I can on account of my blood. I'm not ashamed of it!" His head went up again and his shoulders went back proudly. "But I'm not going to be an object of contempt for the whites of this town. At the high school they've been trying to down me because I'm part Indian. They couldn't have treated me worse if I'd been a nigger. You were my only friend." His voice softened. "You have made friends for me. Now I'm not going to lose all I've gained by having Pima Pete brought in, and letting everybody know what he is to me. Besides, he's my uncle. I'm not going to turn my back on him while he's in trouble."

Clip's words came whisperingly, but with an undertone of firmness and determination there was no shaking.

Matt was in a quandary. He could see Clip's side of the question, and he knew how resolute he always was when he had made up his mind to a certain course.

"Look here," said Matt, "you go and see the sheriff. Tell him everything. He's a good friend of mine, and of

yours, and he'll respect your confidence. While you're doing that, I'll get onto the *Comet*, go out into the hills, and warn Pima Pete myself. It will be safer for me than for you."

Clip stared at Matt for a moment, then walked up to him and gripped his hand.

"That's like you," he returned. "But it won't do. If there's danger in meeting Pima Pete, it's *my* danger. Besides, it's my duty. Another thing. I'll not tell McKibben, nor any one else, what Pima Pete is to me. I'll die first. And as long as you're my friend, you'll not breathe a whisper of it to any one."

The last words were spoken slowly and deliberately.

"No matter what happens, Matt, that shot goes as it lays," went on Clip. "I'm going to see Pima Pete and warn him. I'll start as soon as I leave here. But I'll put on some other clothes so no one will know me. And I won't take my motor-cycle. That would be a give-away. I'll walk."

Matt hardly knew what to do.

"If it wasn't for that confounded note," he muttered, "this business would have a different look. I didn't think Fresnay saw that."

"He said he'd be a friend of ours," frowned Clip gloomily. "Now he's making me trouble."

"Fresnay meant well. He thought he was doing the right thing to carry his suspicions to the sheriff. In any other circumstances, Clip, you'd have done the same thing, and so would I. I'll go with you out there. Then, if anything should come of it, I'll have something to say. Governor Gaynor is a friend of mine, and so is McKibben. I'm sure they'd both of them listen to *me*."

Clip shook his head.

"I'll do this alone. I'm not going to ring you in. If I ever meant anything in my life I mean that. You say you're a friend of mine. Then prove it by staying right here in town. Don't say anything about me to any one. That's all, Matt."

Clip glided to the door, opened it softly, and made a cautious survey of the stairway and the hall.

"The coast is clear," he whispered, turning back for a moment, "and I can get out without being seen. Good-by, pard."

"So-long, Clip."

Clip vanished from the room. Matt, looking from the front window, saw him emerge from the house and start for a back street on his way to the Mexican quarter. His Indian blood never showed in him more than it did then. There was savage wariness in every movement.

Heavy-hearted and full of foreboding, Matt dropped into a chair. His judgment told him that Clip ought not to go into the hills, but there was no way Matt could prevent it. His hands were tied.

For an hour Matt sat in his chair; then, for an hour longer, he paced the floor. After that he tried to read, but his gloomy thoughts would give him no peace.

It was about nine o'clock when he pulled covers, but for a long time he could only toss about sleeplessly and think of Clip. He heard the clock in the court-house tower chime the hours up to midnight, and then dropped into heavy slumber.

The gray dawn was looking in at his windows when he was aroused. Somebody was pounding on his door.

Rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, he jumped up, unlocked the door, and pulled it open.



Chub McReady staggered in. His face was gray in the dim light, and he was breathless from running and excitement.

"What do you think, Matt?" he puffed. "Clip's been arrested. He's over in the jail, now."

## CHAPTER V.

### A VICTIM OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

"Arrested!"

Matt staggered back and dropped on the edge of the bed.

"That's right! Don't it knock you slabsided? Clip! Think of it! I've been on the blink ever since I heard it. Welcome was up early this mornin' and he saw 'em passin' the house, taking Clip to jail. Hogan and Leffingwell, two of McKibben's deputies, had him. And Hogan's arm was in a sling—he'd been shot."

"Not by Clip!" exclaimed Matt, horrified.

"No, but by Pima Pete, one of the Dangerfield gang who was with Clip. Pete got away; and Clip could have got away, too, only he didn't try. That ain't the worst of it, though!" Chub mopped his face with a handkerchief and began fanning himself with his hat. "Great horned toads, Matt, but things have been happenin' so fast I'm fair dazed with 'em all."

"What else has happened, Chub?" demanded Matt, getting up and beginning to scramble into his clothes. "Go ahead. I'll listen while I'm getting dressed."

"You remember what Josh Fresnay, that cowboy, told us," went on Chub, "while we had him on the car racin' away from those stampeding steers? He said he was going to town after ten thousand in gold to meet the Fiddleback pay-roll."

"Yes," put in Matt, with a start, "I remember that."

"Well, Fresnay was robbed, last night. He started for the ranch about nine in the evening, and when he

struck the hills, close to the place where we met the stampeded herd, somebody roped him from the roadside and jerked him out of the saddle. He was pretty badly stunned, but he was able to see that there were two who turned the trick. They looked like half-breeds, to him, although it was too dark to see anything very plain. Before Fresnay could untangle the rope, the two robbers had cut his bag of gold from the saddle and made off with it. Fresnay, as soon as he could corral his wits, started back to town. As luck would have it, he met Hogan and Leffingwell, and told them what had happened. They all three started for the place where the robbery had been pulled off, and ran smack into Clip and this Pima Pete; what's more, Clip was lugging a bag containing nine thousand dollars in gold, and Pete had a buckskin pouch with the other thousand. Now, what d'you think o' that!"

Matt was dumfounded. Towel in hand, he turned gaspingly from the wash-stand and stared at Chub.

But Matt knew what had happened. In spite of his advice, Clip had gone with Pima Pete to Dangerfield's cache and dug up the money. Pete had probably needed the thousand to get away with. By an irony of fate, Dangerfield had buried \$10,000 in gold—just the amount which had been stolen from Fresnay.

"But it wasn't the same money!" declared Matt.

"Yes, it was—anyhow, it looks like it. All double eagles, Matt. It wasn't the same bag, though—but *that* don't count. Great guns! I'd never have thought that of Clip. But blood tells, one way or another, and—"

"Don't you think it of him now, Chub!" cried Matt, scrubbing savagely at his face with a towel. "There's not a dishonest hair in Clip's head. You know it and I know it. This thing can all be explained."

"Of course," said Chub, "it's hard to think Clip's a

thief, but he's up against a hard lot of circumstances, and it's twenty-three for him, I'm afraid."

"It's all circumstantial evidence," growled Matt, "and that means a doubt on the face of it."

"And then to be caught with the goods—"

"It wasn't the 'goods.' Chub, Clip's a chum of yours and mine. Now's when he needs us, more than at any other time. You take it from me, Clip's innocent. We'll pull together and get him clear."

Matt's confidence aroused Chub's.

"But Clip was *disguised*, Matt," said Chub, more than willing to be convinced; "how do you account for that?"

Matt knew how to account for it, all right, but he was not at liberty to tell Chub or any one else.

"That can be explained," said Matt quietly.

The shock of Chub's news had passed, and Matt's keen mind was now busy with the situation. Every circumstance Chub had mentioned was but another coil about the unfortunate Clip. Matt blamed himself for not insisting on going with Clip to meet Pima Pete. Had he gone, he knew he could have kept Pete and Clip from going to Dangerfield's cache and getting the gold. But for that fateful gold, a little figuring would have let Clip out of the whole affair.

"You got all this from Welcome?" asked Matt.

"That's how," replied Chub. "Welcome came on in with Hogan and Leffingwell, and they told him all of it."

"Didn't Clip say anything?"

"You can search me. He was riding behind Leffingwell, handcuffed and tied to the horse. He

looked all gloomed up, Perk said."

"Why shouldn't he?" demanded Matt. "Why did they let Pima Pete get away?" he added angrily. "If they'd brought *him* in, this whole thing could have been straightened out."

"How? You seem to know something—put me wise, Matt."

"I can't tell you now, Chub, but maybe I may after I talk with Clip. Did the deputies tell Welcome how Pima Pete managed to escape?"

"They said he pulled a gun, fired, and jumped into the rocks at the trailside. He dropped the pouch with the thousand, in his hurry. Hogan was hurt, as I said, but Leffingwell drew a gun and would have dropped Pima Pete if Clip hadn't knocked the gun aside. And that's another point against Clip. Jumpin' tarantulas!" and Chub shook his head ominously. "I don't see how we're ever goin' to get Clip out of this, Matt. Even if he wasn't guilty, he acted that way right from the start."

"But he didn't try to run himself! Don't forget that, Chub. What time were Clip and Pima Pete met up with by the deputies?"

"A little after ten last night."

"And they didn't bring Clip in till early this morning?"

"No. Hogan watched Clip, and Leffingwell chased after Pete. Leffingwell couldn't use his horse—you know the lay of the ground out there beside the trail—so Leffingwell had to do his huntin' on foot. He used up several hours, I guess, but Pete got away from him."

"There's another point, Chub," said Matt. "How could Hogan and Leffingwell tell the man was Pete, if it was dark?"

"Leffingwell knows Pete pretty well. You see, Leffingwell comes from Prescott, an' that place used to be an old stamping-ground of the half-breed's. And then Leffingwell got close enough to Pete so he could see him. It was a clear night, and there was a good moon."

Matt knew, naturally, that Leffingwell had made no mistake.

"You say Clip's in jail?" inquired Matt, reaching for his cap.

"That's where they were taking him."

"Well, we'll get a permit from Mr. McKibben and go and have a talk with Clip. I guess the sheriff will be in his office now, on account of this, so we'll slide for the court-house. Come on."

They descended the stairs quickly and let themselves out into the clear morning air.

Would Clip still allow his pride to stand between himself and freedom? He had told Matt that he would die before he would let any one in Phoenix know that Pima Pete was a relative of his. Could Clip explain matters satisfactorily by keeping his relationship with Pete in the background?

The sheriff was in his office, and with him were Hogan and Fresnay. Hogan's arm was hanging from his neck in a sling, and there was a strong smell of drugs in the room, proving that the arm had recently been dressed by a surgeon. Fresnay also had a few bruises, caused by his fall from the back of his horse.

On the sheriff's desk lay a dingy canvas bag and a greasy pouch of buckskin. There was a big pile of gold pieces stacked up by the canvas bag, and a smaller pile heaped up by the pouch.

"Hello, Matt!" called the sheriff, motioning both boys to chairs. "I felt pretty sure you'd show up. Tough luck, eh? But I was afraid of something like this when I called on you last night."

"Clip's innocent, Mr. McKibben," asserted Matt stoutly. "You've made a mistake, Fresnay," he added to the cowboy.

"Wisht I had, pard," answered Fresnay, "jest on yore account. Didn't know, till McKibben told me, that you was sich a great friend o' Clipperton's. But ye kain't dodge the facts, son."

"If you'd got a good look at the two who robbed you," went on Matt, "you'd have known at once that one of them wasn't Clip."

"I was kinder dazed, but them thieves looked like the half-breed and Clipperton. Anyways, we found 'em with the gold, an' that makes it a dead open-an'-shut."

"Is it the same gold?"

"Double eagles. The payin'-teller at the bank'll tell you that's how I drewed the pay-roll money. Allers git it that way."

"Is it the same bag?"

"Waal, no, but it 'u'd be plumb easy ter change bags."

"If your bag was a good one, why would a change be made to that other one?" and Matt's eyes rested on the dingy canvas receptacle on the sheriff's desk.

"Give it up, pard. We got ter take things as we find 'em."

"I know, Matt," put in McKibben, "that you hate to think this of Clip even more than I do, but we've got a clean case against the boy. In the first place, he was in the red roadster when Fresnay told all of you he was

coming to town after ten thousand in gold; then Clipperton gets into a disguise and walks into the hills —*walks*, mind you, so no one will guess who he is, which wouldn't have been hard if he'd taken the motor-cycle; and then he's bagged with the money and refuses to say a word about that note Pima Pete gave him, or how he came to be in the hills with the half-breed. It looks mighty bad for Clipperton, I can tell you that. I've sent for him, though, so as to have another talk with him. Glad you came. Maybe you can get him to say something. Ah, here he is now."

Just at that moment the door opened and Clip came into the room. He was handcuffed, and Leffingwell had a hand through his arm.

Matt and Chub got up and stepped toward their chum.

"Cheer up, old chum!" said Matt, taking Clip's hand. "We know you're innocent, and we're going to prove it."

"You bet we are!" declared Chub.

Clip looked his gratitude, at the same time there was a restraining gleam in the eyes he turned on Matt.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PRIDE OF TOM CLIPPERTON.

At that significant look from Clipperton, Matt's hopes went down. Apparently not even arrest, or the dubious prospect ahead of him, had shaken Tom Clipperton's resolve to hide his dealings with Pima Pete. Defiantly he turned to face the sheriff.

"You're in a bad hole, Clipperton," said McKibben, "and I've brought you here to see again if you won't tell us something that will make this look a little less dark for you. I want to be your friend, but I can't do anything if you're not perfectly frank with me."

"If you want to be my friend, look for the real robbers," answered Clip. "I didn't take Fresnay's money."

"Where did you get that gold, then?"

"I dug it up."

The sheriff looked incredulous, as well he might; Hogan muttered sarcastically, and Fresnay shook his head.

"It's a fact!" declared Clip angrily. "You can go and see the place. Look at that bag!" He whirled and pointed to the dingy canvas sack on the desk. "There's sand on it yet."

"It won't do, Clip," said McKibben. "Don't it strike you as mighty odd you should dig up just the amount of money that was taken from Fresnay, and all of the same kind? But, assuming that you did dig it up, who put the gold in the ground? And what had Pima Pete to do with it?"

"I can't tell you that," answered Clipperton stiffly.

Matt went over to Clip and whispered to him.

"For heaven's sake, Clip, don't you understand what this means to you? Make a clean breast of everything!"

"I'll go to prison for life first! You know how I've been treated here, and you know what would be said of me if they knew all about Pima Pete."

"Anyhow," pleaded Matt, "tell the sheriff it was Dangerfield's money. Dangerfield himself will bear you out in that."

"They wouldn't believe me, and they wouldn't believe Dangerfield. I'll tell them that much, though. Don't you forget! If you're a friend of mine you'll say nothing."

"Not to Chub?"

Clip hesitated.

"We're both of us going to help you out of this," went on Matt earnestly, "one way or another. But we can work better if Chub knows as much as I do."

"Tell him," said Clip. "But make him promise not to tell any one else. I'm not ashamed of my blood, but if they knew Pima Pete was my uncle they'd be more ready to fasten this onto me."

"That's a mistake, old fellow, and—"

"I've made up my mind!" The black eyes flashed. "If you and Chub find the real thieves, and get back the other ten thousand dollars, that would let me out. Nothing else will."

It was a terrible mistake Clip was making, but his nature had been so warped because of the treatment he had suffered on account of his Indian blood, that it was impossible for him to see the matter in the right light. Matt drew back, his face showing his intense

disappointment.

"It was Dangerfield's money," said Clip to McKibben.

The sheriff did not believe the statement, and neither did Hogan nor Fresnay nor Leffingwell.

"Where did Dangerfield get all that money?" asked McKibben; "and why did he hide it like that?"

"Ask him," said Clip curtly. The looks on the faces of his inquisitors had brought his pride and defiance to the surface.

"Where is Dangerfield now, Mr. McKibben?" asked Matt.

"He has been taken to the government prison at Leavenworth," answered the sheriff.

"Can't you write him, tell what has happened, and ask him for a statement?"

"What's the use, Matt? The whole thing sounds too fishy."

"Do it for me, Mr. McKibben! I *know* Clip's telling the truth. Why, Dangerfield wanted me to help dig up that gold—"

Matt stopped suddenly. Clip's eyes were on him and were telling him plainly he had said too much.

"Wanted *you* to help dig it up?" queried the puzzled sheriff.

"Write and ask him about it," said Matt.

"I will," averred McKibben, "just because of what you say. My letter will go to the warden of the prison, however, and I'll have him question Dangerfield. It's too improbable a yarn, though, and I haven't any hopes."

He turned to Clip.

"What was in that note Pima Pete gave you?" he asked.

"Pete asked me to meet him last night and dig up the gold," replied Clip.

"Have you the note?"

"I burned it."

"Why did you do that?"

Clip was silent.

"Why did you disguise yourself when you went out to meet Pima Pete?"

Still Clip would not answer.

"Why did you grab Leffingwell's revolver and keep him from shooting the half-breed when he was running away?"

The use of the word "half-breed" was unfortunate. It reminded Clip how ready they were to think evil of him on account of his mixed blood.

"That's my business," said he curtly.

The sharp answer aroused the sheriff's resentment.

"Very well, if you're foolish enough to take that stand, Clipperton. You'll have an examination this afternoon, but you might as well waive it, if you're going to keep that attitude."

"He'll have a lawyer to look after his interests, Mr. McKibben," spoke up Matt.

"Who'll pay for the lawyer?" asked Clip, turning on Matt.

"I will! Dangerfield got you into this, and I'll spend every cent paid to me for his capture to get you clear."

Clip stretched out his hands quietly, the handcuffs

rattling. Matt clasped his chum's palm loyally, and Clip turned away. McKibben motioned to Leffingwell, and the prisoner was led out of the room.

"You're certainly a mighty good friend of Clipperton's," said the sheriff to Matt, "but he don't deserve it."

"You don't know him as well as I do," said Matt. "He could explain a whole lot, if he would."

"Then why don't he do it?"

"Mistaken pride," flushed Matt, "and it comes from the scurvy way people have treated him here in Phoenix."

"Then that mistaken pride," said the sheriff gravely, "is going to land him in the penitentiary."

"Not if Chub and I can save him!"

"What have you and Chub got to work on?"

"The theory you won't accept—that the real thieves, with another lot of money, are hiding away somewhere, tickled to death to think that you're on the wrong track."

"Matt," and the sheriff came close to the boy and dropped a hand on his shoulder, "you're the clear quill, and I think a heap of you, but you're going it wrong. That Injun was never born who wouldn't steal, and there's enough Injun blood in Tom Clipperton to make him a thief. Come! There's no use beating about the bush; we might just as well call a spade a spade and be done with it. Let the law take its course with Clipperton—you can't stop it."

"I *will* stop it," declared Matt; "McReady and I will prove that Clipperton is innocent."

"I wish I had a few friends like you," muttered the

sheriff.

"Same here," spoke up Fresnay, stepping forward. "Ye don't hold any grouch ag'inst me, do you, Matt?"

"No; you only did what you thought was right. And that's all Tom Clipperton did. All of you will be next to that, one of these days."

"Well," said McKibben, "I know you've got nerve, and I know that when you make up your mind to a thing you hang to it tighter than a dog to a bone. But you listen to me Matt: If you spend all your money for Clipperton you'll be sorry."

"Anyhow, you're going to write to Leavenworth?" asked Matt.

"I'll do that at once."

That was about all Matt had gained by his interview in the sheriff's office. He and Chub went out, and Chub heaved a long breath as they went down the courthouse steps.

"There's a hen on somewhere, Matt," said Chub. "I'm pretty thick-headed, but I can see that. What was you whisperin' to Clip about?"

"I was trying to get him to make a clean breast of everything," replied Matt gloomily.

"And he wouldn't?"

"No; but he said I could let you in on all I know, providing you'd agree to keep it to yourself."

"Sure I'll keep it to myself. That's all to the good. Fire away."

"Come over to breakfast with me at Mrs. Spooner's. I'll tell you as we go along."

Matt began by telling Chub how Dangerfield had

asked him to help in some work or other which Pima Pete knew about; then he went on to tell about the note given to Clip by Pete, of the former's call the afternoon before, and about Clip's determination to see Pete and warn him away. Then Matt made the whole thing clear by explaining that Pima Pete was Clip's uncle.

Chub was so astounded he could only whistle. They were at Mrs. Spooner's before he could make any comment one way or another, and the landlady was waiting with a badly soiled envelope addressed to Matt.

"That there letter," explained Mrs. Spooner, "was left here by the worst-lookin' greaser I calculate I ever seen. He jest said that was fer you, Matt, an' left straight off. I didn't ask his name, or anythin' else, bein' glad enough to see his back, I can tell ye."

Matt tore open the envelope and drew out a folded sheet of paper. Grimy fingers had left marks all over the paper, but the writing—a mere lead-pencil scrawl—was legible enough.

"CoM PresKot tursda be Att brigs hous wait."

That was all. No signature, and nothing but the eight misspelled words.

Was it a clue that pointed to something worth while in Clip's case?

## CHAPTER VII.

### LAYING PLANS.

While he and Chub were eating their breakfast Matt questioned Mrs. Spooner more at length regarding the Mexican who had brought the letter. But he was not able to find out anything more than he already knew. Mrs. Spooner had about as much use for a Mexican as she had for an Indian, and that was no use at all. Consequently she had paid but little attention to the messenger who had delivered the letter, and had been very glad to get rid of him so quickly.

Mrs. Spooner was a good woman, but very inquisitive. From the questions Matt put about the letter she knew it must be of considerable importance, and she tried hard to find out something about its contents. In order to get away, Matt ate less breakfast than usual, and hustled Chub up to his room. There he passed the letter over for Chub's inspection.

"I guess," remarked Chub, after studying the scrawl, "that you can translate that to mean 'Come to Prescott on Thursday. Be at the Briggs House, and wait for something to happen.' Is that what you make of it, Matt?"

"Yes."

"A fair shake, do you think, or is somebody trying to string you?"

"I can't imagine who'd want to string me, Chub. It may have something to do with Clip. And to-morrow's Thursday."

"I can get next to that, all right. It won't do any harm to follow up the tip and see what it amounts to."



Suppose I get that one-cylinder machine of Clip's and we make the trip to Prescott on our motor-cycles?"

"Bully! But we can't get away much before this evening, Chub. When the bank opens I want to get some money and hire a lawyer for Clip; then I'd like to ride out to the hills and look over the scene of the robbery. After that we could hike for Prescott. Do you know the road?"

"I could go over it with my eyes shut."

"Good all the way?"

"In dry weather. When it's wet there are whole miles of trail where the motor-cycle would mire clear to the forks. We could go on the train, though, if you wanted to. I know Jack Moody, one of the engineers. He runs up to Ash Fork in the afternoon and comes back the next afternoon; but whether his run's to-day or not I don't know."

"It's better to use the motor-cycles. I haven't given the *Comet* a real spin since I took that hundred-mile run for the governor."

"Then we'll take the wheels and start this afternoon. But look here, Matt. I think a lot of Clip, but he's actin' mighty like he belongs in the foolish-house, seems to me. It wouldn't hurt him much if he told everything he knew—and it mightn't get him out of the scrape, either, but it would help, that's a cinch."

"Clip's a mighty queer fellow, and I don't know that I can blame him for feeling like he does. You know how pretty near everybody has thrown it into him here in Phoenix, because he's part Indian. He's trying to do the square thing, and it hurts. Now, just as he's getting the better of that prejudice, if it came out that Pima Pete, one of the Dangerfield gang, was a relative of his, that would be like turning the knife in an old wound. Clip's

got a lot of pride, and he feels as though he wanted to do everything he could for Pima Pete. It's possible he'll go to prison before he opens his head about Pete; unless—"

Matt hesitated.

"Unless what?" asked Chub.

"Why, unless you and I can find the real robbers and the other bag of gold."

"It's a big order," said Chub.

"I've been filling big orders lately," smiled Matt, "and I'd tackle anything if there was a chance of helping Clip."

"Here, too. But what have we got to go on? Nothing but a few words from a mutt who must have spent most of his time playin' hooky when he went to school. For all we know, it's just as much of a wrong steer as a right one."

"Well, it's a warm guess that McKibben won't strain himself looking for any more robbers."

"He thinks there were only two robbers, and that he's got them. Not knowin' what we do, Matt, an' considerin' the way Clip acts, you can't blame McKibben a terrible sight."

"That's right, we can't. But it bats the whole thing up to us. Maybe McKibben will shake himself together and send some deputies after the other robbers when he hears from Dangerfield."

"What do you think Dangerfield will say?"

"He'll tell the truth, and that will prove that Clip wasn't lying when he said he dug up that money."

"Sounds like a pipe-dream, though, don't it, that Dangerfield buried just ten thousand in double eagles

—same as what Fresnay got from the bank?"

"That's a mighty bad coincidence for Clip. Everything's gone wrong for him. He disguised himself so he wouldn't be recognized when he went out to meet his uncle, and now they think he put on those old clothes so he wouldn't be known when he committed the robbery! And when he saved his uncle's life by knocking Leffingwell's revolver aside, McKibben and the deputies drew their own conclusions about that."

"If Pima Pete thought as much of helping Clip as Clip thought of helping him, he'll walk right into the sheriff's office as soon as he hears what's happened."

"That's the last thing Clip would want him to do. The whole business might come out—and I believe Clip would rather go to prison than have it known a relative of his belonged to the Dangerfield gang. Clip knows that everybody thinks Indian blood is no good, and he's been trying to change their notions. I've got something in my head. It's this: You know there were four or five of Dangerfield's gang got away the time Sheriff Burke, of Prescott, rounded the smugglers up at Tinaja Wells. It's the general idea they got over into Mexico, but maybe some of them have been hanging out in the hills; and maybe two of them got wind of this trip of Fresnay's after the pay-roll money and laid for him."

"A cinch!" cried Chub, electrified. "I'll bet money that's the way of it. But those two handy-boys may be on the way to Mexico now. If that's so, I can see where we get off!"

"If we can't catch the robbers," said Matt, "maybe we can catch Pima Pete."

"What good would that do? Clip don't want him caught."

"I don't mean to bring him to Phoenix," pursued Matt, "nor to turn him over to the officers. If we could find him, and make him swear to what he and Clip did last night, that ought to help Clip's case a whole lot."

"That means, then, we've got two strings to pull—either find the two robbers or find Pima Pete."

"This clue may help," and Matt pointed to the note which lay on the table.

"I'm not banking a whole lot on that. It's got all the earmarks of a false alarm. Goin' to show it to McKibben?"

"I'm not going to show it to anybody. It may not amount to anything, but we'll run it down and make sure."

Just then the pounding of a motor from the road in front reached the boys.

"Great guns!" exclaimed Chub, looking from a window. "There's McKibben, now, and he's stopping in front."

Matt looked out. McKibben, in the red roadster, had pulled to a stop in front of Mrs. Spooner's gate. Leffingwell was in the rumble-seat.

The sheriff looked up and saw Matt, then waved his hand for him to come down.

"There's something up, Chub," said Matt. "Let's go down and see what it is."

The two boys hurried down-stairs and out of the house.

"What is it, Mr. McKibben?" asked Matt.

The sheriff reached into his pocket and drew out a yellow slip.

"It's a telegram, Matt," said he. "Just came—and not more than half an hour after I had posted that letter to the warden of the government prison at Leavenworth."

Matt unfolded the slip, hoping against hope that it contained good news of some sort. But he was far afield, for the news was anything but good.

"Dangerfield committed suicide in his cell here last night. Advise name of next of kin, if you know it."

Matt's hands closed convulsively on the yellow sheet. Another hope gone—and there were not many for Clip to lose!

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE RIFLED CACHE.

"Tough luck!" exclaimed Chub, looking over Matt's shoulder and reading the message. "It never rains but it comes down in buckets."

"It *is* tough, and no mistake," said McKibben. "I'm anxious to give Clipperton every chance, but he's his own worst enemy, and everything goes against him. Why, here I'm in starting on a wild-goose chase into the hills, looking for that rifled cache where Clip says he dug up the gold! Jump in, Matt, I want to take you with us. You, too, Chub; get into this other seat with me, for I'm not going to do the driving myself when there's such a crack chauffeur as Motor Matt along."

McKibben changed his seat, and Chub climbed in. Matt walked around to the other side.

"What time is Clip's examination, Mr. McKibben?" he asked.

"Four o'clock this afternoon."

"I want to get back before the bank closes and in time to hire a lawyer."

"I expect to get back here by eleven o'clock."

With that, Matt cranked up the machine, got in, and they started.

There was no tarrying on the road, for Matt was anxious to get back, and he had Leffingwell hanging to the rumble-seat with both hands half the time.

"You're going to look for the place where Clip and Pima Pete dug up the money, Mr. McKibben?" asked Matt.

"For the place where Clip *says* they dug it up," qualified the sheriff.

"He told you where to go?"

"Yes."

"And if you see the place you'll believe his story?"

"I'm not saying that, Matt. Clip and Pete may have dug the hole for some other purpose, and Clip may have been smart enough to call the hole a cache, and to say Fresnay's money came out of it. By the way," the sheriff went on, deftly changing the subject, "you were with Dangerfield quite a while, that time you brought him in from Castle Creek Cañon. Was that the time he spoke about having buried that money and asked you to help dig it up?"

"I don't want to talk about that now, Mr. McKibben," answered Matt. "There's a whole lot to it that concerns Clip, and I promised him I wouldn't explain."

"You boys are keeping something back—I know that. If you want to get Clip out of a bad hole, Matt, you don't want to keep anything back, no matter what Clip says. You've got to help him in spite of himself. This is no time for false ideas of loyalty to a friend."

"What I know wouldn't clear Clip," said Matt, "although it would explain a few things that are counting against him. I'm in honor bound to keep it quiet."

"Well," went on the sheriff, "have you any idea who Dangerfield's next of kin is?"

"I understand that he has a father living in Emmetsburg, Iowa."

"Good enough! I'll wire that to Leavenworth."

Under McKibben's direction Matt brought the

roadster to a stop close to the place where Fresnay's saddle had turned while he was trying to pick up Welcome during the stampede. Leaving the car in charge of Chub, Matt, McKibben, and Leffingwell got out, found the easiest place for climbing the steep bank, and made their way westward into the uplifts.

As they proceeded, the sheriff eyed their surroundings keenly, apparently laying his course by landmarks about which Clip had told him. After fifteen minutes of scrambling among the rocks, McKibben brought his two companions to a halt at the foot of a rocky hill. Here there was a hole about three feet deep with a heap of sand lying beside it. Close to the edge of the hole a dozen stones had been laid in the form of a cross.

"There you are Leffingwell," remarked McKibben. "What do you think about it?"

"Some 'un was at work here," replied the deputy, "an' not very long ago, at that."

"It was Clip and Pete," put in Matt, and pointed to the print of a moccasin and of a boot-sole in the soft sand at the side of the hole. "Pima Pete wore moccasins."

"They dug up somethin' here, all right," commented Leffingwell, "but I'll bet somethin' handsome it wasn't money."

McKibben wandered around the vicinity of the hole for a few minutes and then turned and started back toward the road.

"We've only Clipperton's word for it," said he, as he descended the bank to the car.

"And mine," added Matt.

"We'll never have Dangerfield's—now."



"Would Pima Pete's sworn statement help any?" asked Matt.

"It might, Matt; but just how much weight Pima Pete's affidavit would have with a jury is a question."

On the homeward trip another halt was made at the place where Fresnay had been robbed. The road was hard at this point, and the unyielding earth had left no sign of what had taken place.

This was another disappointment for Matt. If the ground had been soft, *and no moccasin-tracks found*, a good point would have been scored for Clip. But fate seemed to be working against Clip at almost every turn.

The party got back to Phoenix at half-past ten, and Matt and Chub left the car at the bank. Here Matt drew \$200 of the money that had been paid to him as a reward for bringing in Dangerfield, and the boys proceeded at once to the office of a legal gentleman whom Clip declared to be one of the best criminal-lawyers in Phoenix.

The man's name was Short, and, oddly enough, he stood over six feet in his stockings. He had a gimlet-eye and a hawklike face, and was professionally brusque and brutally frank. But he had already heard of Clip's arrest, and, as everybody in town knew Motor Matt—who had been a good deal in the public eye during the preceding weeks—the lawyer listened to the young motorist with attention.

"How much money have you got to spend on this, King?" queried the lawyer.

"I've got \$900," said Matt, "but I'll need some of that for other expenses."

"What expenses?"

"I'll explain, Mr. Short, when you tell me whether or not you'll take the case."

"The long and short of it is this: If we can't break down Clipperton's stubbornness, and induce him to tell what he knows, he's a gone gosling. If I get him clear I want \$500; if I lose—which seems a foregone conclusion—\$250 will settle the bill."

"Here's a hundred on account," said Matt, and Short gave him a receipt and pocketed the money.

"Now, about the clues you have," said Short.

Matt showed the note received at the boarding-house that morning. The lawyer examined it, puckered up his brows, and drummed on the desk with his fingers.

"Not worth the paper it's written on," said he. "That's my opinion, but it seems to be the only clue we have, so you'd better follow it. I'll go over and talk with Clipperton. Probably we'll waive examination. He'll be held to the circuit court, now in session, and the case will no doubt be taken right up. Are you prepared to furnish bail and get Clipperton out for a few days? I wouldn't advise it. He might run."

"No danger of his running, Mr. Short," said Matt sharply. "Clip's as innocent of that robbery as I am."

"That's my attitude—publicly; but to you, King, I'm frank. However, we'll do what we can. I don't want to lose out, for it means something to me if I win. You boys might go over with me to see Clipperton, and try to get him in a receptive frame of mind. He ought not to keep anything from his lawyer."

The lawyer put on his hat and started for the door.

"How much bail will be required to get Clip out?" Matt asked.

"I think I can get it down to \$5,000."

"I've got friends in town—"

"You bet you have!" declared Short; "Governor Gaynor, for instance."

"But the way everybody feels toward Clip, I can't ask any of my friends to go on his bail."

"Just as well. I think the case will come to trial in two or three days. The court is now sitting, and there's not much on the docket."

Mr. McKibben had got back to his office, and the necessary permit for the boys and the lawyer to see Clipperton was quickly obtained.

Clip was a forlorn-looking figure, sitting in his cell with arms folded and head bent. Matt's sympathy went out to him, and, after introducing the lawyer, he slapped him encouragingly on the shoulder and begged him to go into details as much as he could.

Clip was grateful to Matt, and showed it, but not even to Short would he give the true inwardness of the affair. Matt did not tell Clip about the note received through Mrs. Spooner, thinking he might imagine it had something to do with Pima Pete, and shut down on having the clue followed.

When they left the jail Short was tempted to withdraw from the case. "What can we do for a fellow who won't help himself?" he demanded, out of patience.

Matt prevailed on him, however, to do what he could, and the boys left him at the foot of the stairs leading up to his office.

"We're up against it, pard," remarked Chub gloomily, as he and Matt went off down the street. "I'm no knocker, but hanging out like this is the worst kind of

foolishness on Clip's part. He's crazy, to act like he's doing. McKibben knew his business when he told you to do what you thought best, and never mind Clip."

"Get that out of your head, Chub," said Matt. "We've got to win this game for Clip on the lines he has laid down. When will you be ready to start for Prescott?"

"Just as soon as I can tell sis, eat my dinner, and pick up Clip's motor-cycle."

"All right. When you're ready come around to Mrs. Spooner's."

The two chums separated. Matt, profoundly dissatisfied with the course of events, took his way toward his boarding-house. As if he had not already had enough to discourage him, Mrs. Spooner, tremendously excited, met him in the hall with another letter.

"The same greaser brought this 'un that brought the other, Matt," she explained. "I didn't like his looks any too well, but I tried to get him to tell his name, knowin' how curious ye was about it. He was that unmannerly, though, he jest bolted right off'n the front steps."

"It doesn't make any difference, Mrs. Spooner," said Matt, "for I don't think it amounts to much."

Matt went on up-stairs, and in the privacy of his room examined the letter. It was better written and better spelled than the other note had been, and was plainly from another hand; but there was no name signed and no other clue to the sender.

The contents, however, were surprising.

"If you start for Prescott you'll never get there alive. Take a fool's advice and keep away."

Matt was amazed. Evidently that first communication was of some importance, or the

present writer would never have taken the trouble to send such a threat.

So far from being intimidated, a steely glint came into Matt's eyes, and his square jaw set resolutely.

"Chub and I are going to Prescott," he muttered, "and I guess we can take care of all the trouble that comes our way."

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BREAK IN THE ROAD.

Several days before, when Matt had been planning to start for Denver on his motor-cycle, he had bought an auxiliary gasoline-tank. The tank that came with the machine was attached behind the saddle, and held five quarts, sufficient for a run of 75 to 100 miles. The auxiliary tank was attached to the top tube, and its tubes and connections were so arranged that it could be used independently of the tank behind. With both tanks filled, the *Comet's* radius of action was increased at least 75 miles—enough to carry the machine half-again as far as Prescott.

Matt had never experienced any trouble with the *Comet*. As a rule, common sense and ordinary thoughtfulness are enough to keep any good motor-cycle on the road without repair bills. The *Comet* was always as spick and span as when it came from the factory, for Matt groomed the machine as he would have groomed a race-horse, and cleanliness is one of the first points to look after if a machine is to travel right. On his return from a trip he never failed to go over the motor-cycle with wrench and pliers, to inject a few squirts of kerosene into the warm cylinders, and to "turn over" the engine a few times. He was busy making a final survey of the *Comet* when Chub pounded up on Clip's machine. A canteen, lashed to the head of the one-cylinder, showed that Chub had been thoughtful enough to secure a reserve supply of gasoline.

"All ready?" sang out Matt.

"Ready's whole family," answered Chub.

Two minutes later the boys were skimming north along the Cave Creek road. Beyond the outlying canal they struck the hills, and here Matt instructed Chub a little in nursing his machine—not to open the muffler when there was no real necessity, to let the burned oil out of the motor base at least once every fifty miles, and to cut off the power when descending hills in order to cool and help the engine.

They were well into the hills before Matt told Chub about the second letter, and showed it to him.

"Thunder!" exclaimed Chub. "It must be a swift bunch we're up against. But I guess they're four-flushin'. Anyhow," he grinned, "I'm not scared so you can notice it."

"It makes me think," said Matt, "that there's something in that first note, in spite of Short's opinion."

"Sure," answered Chub. "That first note is lookin' better and better to me. Different fists worked on those two letters. The last one must have been jotted down by a fellow who'd been through the eighth grade, anyhow. How do you size 'em up?"

"It's all guesswork, Chub, but my guess is that some party intends giving us a tip, and that another one found it out, and is trying to backcap the first man. The tip must be important, or the second man wouldn't try to keep us away from Prescott. To follow the thing farther, the second man may be one of the two who held up Fresnoy."

"Keno! And we've landed with both feet right in something that seems worth while. The second man is trying a bluff—but if he had known Motor Matt better he might have saved himself the trouble."

"We'll keep our eyes skinned, all the same," said

Matt. "If it's really a bluff, we won't lose anything by being careful; while if it isn't, we'll have a lot to gain."

"Correct. An ounce of prevention is worth a ton of cure."

The road, although it twisted back and forth between rocky hills, was smooth and even. Both motor-cycles worked to perfection, and the boys went spinning along at a leisurely clip, keeping a sharp watch all around them.

At the town-pump, in Wickenburg, they stopped for a drink, then struck out for Skull Valley, where the railroad had an eating-house at which they had planned to get supper. They were still wary, although the prospect of trouble seemed to be growing more and more remote.

Chub, overconfident as usual, was just exulting over the way they had "called the bluff" of the unknown writer of the second note, when trouble materialized like a bolt from the blue.

It was at a place where the road-bed was like asphalt, although crooked as a snake, and edged on both sides with rocky hills.

In passing a gap between two of the hills Matt heard sounds that aroused his apprehension. He might have been mistaken, but he thought he heard a scrambling of hoofs.

"Hit her up, Chub," said he, in a low voice. "Did you hear a noise on the left of the road? I did, and I don't like it."

Just as the two machines forged ahead at increased speed, a shout came from behind the boys:

"Stop! Stop, or we'll shoot!"

Matt and Chub stole a quick look behind. Two



horsemen were in the road, and one of them was armed with a rifle.

"Faster!" cried Matt. "Get around the next turn!"

There was no need of a spur for Chub. His idea that the writer of that second note was "four-flushing" had proved to be a dream, and he was coaxing his motor-cycle to the limit.

*Bang!*

The sharp report echoed and reechoed through the hills, and a spurt of dust shot up between the two racing wheels.

"They're shooting at our tires!" called Matt.

"If they'll give us about a minute more," answered Chub, doubled over his handle-bars, "they can blaze away all they please. They've got to haul up if they do any straight shooting, and while they're standing still we're getting into the distance. If— Wow!"

Chub broke off with a startled yell. One of the bullets had passed altogether too close to him for any sort of comfort.

The next moment the shoulder of a hill intervened between the boys and the marksman. They were safe for the moment, but, above the noise of their machines, they could hear a flurry of pounding hoofs.

"They mean business, all right," said Chub grimly, "but if they've a notion they can overhaul us on a couple of cayuses, they've got another guess coming."

"Look!" shouted Matt suddenly; "there, ahead!"

Chub stared, and instinctively a shout of despair escaped his lips.

Ahead of the boys was a long, straight slope. At the foot of the slope there was a break in the road, a gap

crossing it at right angles and seven or eight feet wide.

"There were planks across that gap!" cried Chub. "Those scoundrels have taken them away. They've got us, Matt!"

For a moment Motor Matt did not answer. He was gazing sharply at the break. The chasm seemed deep, even if it was not very wide, and was evidently the course of a small stream. Just before the edge of the gap was reached, heavy freighting over the road had hollowed out the road-bed.

A daring idea took form in Matt's mind.

"We'll get across!" he cried.

"How?" gasped Chub.

"That hollowed-out place—our machines will be thrown upward at the other side of it—*they'll leap across!*"

Chub's heart almost stood still. He was brave enough, but he did not understand the possibilities of the situation so well as Matt, and the attempt to hurl their motor-cycles across the gap looked like the worst kind of recklessness.

"Give her every ounce of power, Chub!" shouted Matt. "Head straight for the gap and keep the middle of the road. Watch me; I'll take it first."

The *Comet* was a much faster machine than the one Chub was riding. Up to that moment Matt had been holding back in order to stay alongside his chum; but now, in order to demonstrate the feasibility of the fearful leap he had suggested, he opened the throttle and forged into the lead.

Chub, every faculty centered in his handle-bars, saw Matt duck downward into the hollow, shoot upward, spin through the air as though launched from a

catapult, then alight on the opposite side of the break a good four feet from the edge. What was more, the *Comet* did not seem to mind the leap any more than a spirited horse would have done, and started on up the road in excellent style. Matt, however, halted and turned back.

There were some doubts in his mind about Chub. Clip's motor-cycle wasn't a very late machine and might not be able to duplicate the *Comet's* performance. Far up the slope the horsemen could be seen racing after the boys at top speed. There was nothing else for it, Matt knew, but for Chub to take his chance.

Down into the hollow went Chub, then up and out, the one-cylinder's wheels spinning in mid-air. Down he came, safe by a scant margin, and a breath of relief rushed through Matt's lips.

Baffled shouts came from the horsemen. Matt's hopes were dashed somewhat by sounds which told him Chub's machine was beginning to misfire.

"Use your pedals!" shouted Matt. "Open the throttle, Chub!"

Matt knew that the jolt the machine had had was probably the cause of the misfiring. The jar had perhaps caused the carburetter-float to stick, thus interrupting the regular flow of gasoline.

Opening the throttle did not seem to help. Matt, watching the horsemen, saw them getting ready to take the gap at a leap. To delay much longer would surely mean capture.

"Hold down the priming-pin for a second!" yelled Matt.

He was making ready to go back to Chub's assistance, when the motor took hold in proper shape,

and Chub, white and worried but mightily relieved, came gliding along.

"I'm a regular mutt in a pinch like that," said he.

"Lost my head completely, and wouldn't have known the first thing to do if you hadn't yelled."

"Let 'er out again," returned Matt. "We'll leave those two scoundrels behind, now, for good and all. The main thing is to get out of rifle-range while they're leaping the gap."

Side by side the chums plunged away. Looking behind them, just before they took a turn, they saw the two horsemen swinging into the air and taking the leap safely.

"We'll lead 'em now," gloried Chub, "clear into Skull Valley, if they want to follow!"

## CHAPTER X.

### PRESCOTT.

Not again did the boys see their pursuers, and for five minutes they kept up their swift pace. When finally sure that they were safe, they slowed down their machines.

"Didn't you ever get rattled, Matt?" asked Chub.

"Lots of times, old fellow," laughed Matt.

"Well, if you'd got rattled back there at the break in the road little Reddy McReady would have been raked in too easy for any use. Those two roughs were dead set on getting us. Must be something mighty important ahead of us in Prescott or they wouldn't have tried so hard to hold us back."

"I'm getting more confidence in that first note all the time," declared Matt.

"That's the way I stack up. It was a regular raw blazer of a play, though, the way those fellows came at us. But they'd laid their plans pretty well. Where they missed was in not riding out into the trail ahead of us instead of behind."

"That wasn't a miss," said Matt, "that was a part of their plan. They had taken up the planks across that break in the road, and thought they'd chase us to the chasm and stop us there."

"I'll bet the air is some blue around where those two fellows are now," laughed Chub. "But put me wise to this: How did they know we were intending to go to Prescott on our motor-cycles?"

"That's too many for me, Chub. There's been quite a

lot going on in Phoenix that I can't understand. The same Mexican delivered both notes to Mrs. Spooner, and it looks as though the two men who robbed Fresno had been staying in the town, and at the same place where the fellow who wrote the first note was hanging out."

"If we'd had time to look up that Mexican—"

"Couldn't have found him in a thousand years from Mrs. Spooner's description. If I'd been at home when he brought that second note, he wouldn't have got away until he had told me a few things."

"My thinkin'-apparatus is all kinked up over the whole business," puzzled Chub, "but it looks like those two handy-boys are playing the game all by themselves. One of them wrote that warning and sent it to us, then picked up his partner and slid for the hills in order to stop us if the note didn't scare us out. They're the robbers, Matt; they're the ones that lifted Fresno's money, all right."

"Then what do they want to keep us away from Prescott for?" queried Matt. "They needn't worry about themselves. With two good horses, and their freedom, and ten thousand in gold, they could start for Mexico. Whatever we can do in Prescott needn't bother them."

"Maybe they're not able to clear out just yet."

All the speculations of the chums regarding the two notes, and the men who had recently tried to stop them, were mere guesswork. Giving up their attempt to probe the mystery, they set themselves to the task of reaching Prescott as soon as possible.

At Skull Valley, a place consisting of only half a dozen houses and the railroad-station, they halted just long enough to eat a hurried meal. There was the chance, if they tarried too long, that their enemies

might attempt to get ahead of them on the road they were still to cover.

When they had finished eating, the boys went over their machines, tightened a few bolts, lighted their lamps—it was beginning to get dark—then mounted and hurried on.

From Skull Valley north they found the worst part of the road. It was on low ground, and boggy. During the present dry weather the road was passably good, but after a rain it would have been difficult for wagons to travel it, to say nothing of motor-cycles.

For the most of the way the trail tried to follow the railroad-track, dipping under high trestles and angling back and forth across the rails. It was poor up to within half a dozen miles of Prescott, and then, abruptly, it became like an asphalt boulevard, level with the track and smooth and clean right up to the ends of the ties.

It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening when the boys reached this good stretch of road, and their lamps, streaming out ahead, showed it to them clearly.

"Mighty good going for a motor-cycle race," said Chub.

"And a fine place for racing a limited train," added Matt, his mind running on the possibilities of steam versus gasoline.

"Say," said Chub, "I'd like to see the *Comet* splurging along by Jack Moody's big Baldwin, with Moody late and making up time! Whoo-ee! That would be a race! When Moody's behind his schedule you'd think a wildman was at the throttle."

Although the boys did not dream of it at the time, yet this talk of theirs was prophetic.

Presently the motor-cycles glided over a low hill,

covered a couple of miles of level road, crossed the track, and entered the town of Prescott.

Chub, who had been in Prescott several times, knew the location of the Briggs House, and led the way directly there. They registered, secured a room on the ground floor, and, in order to make sure there would be no tampering with their machines, trundled them into the room where they would be constantly under their eyes or else behind a locked door.

The motor-cycles were looked over and taken care of, and then the boys, tired out with their trip, tumbled into bed and fell asleep.

They were up in time for breakfast, and were eagerly expecting something to happen. It was Thursday, the day specified in the note which had been so mysteriously delivered at Mrs. Spooner's.

Following breakfast, they sat around the hotel office, impatient and with every faculty on the alert.

Noon came, and they had dinner, then the afternoon waned, and they had supper. No one came near them to broach anything connected with the particular business that had brought them to Prescott. By eleven o'clock Matt gave up hope of hearing anything that day, and he and Chub went to bed.

Chub was very much discouraged.

"I'm beginnin' to think that wasn't much of a tip, after all," he grumbled, as he rolled into bed.

"Something may have happened to keep the man who wrote that first note from showing his hand," hazarded Matt.

"Yes," returned Chub, "and something may have happened to him that will keep him from showing his hand at all."



"You mean—"

"Why, that those two roughs who chased us may have taken care of that fellow who wrote the first note. After we got away from them, those scoundrels may have decided to put the other man out of the way. That would keep the fellow from communicating with us, and it's a cinch that's what those handy-boys were afraid of. Matt, I'd be willin' to bet dad's gold-mine against a peck of marbles that we're side-tracked, and won't be able to do a thing for Clip."

"We'll stay here, anyhow," said Matt doggedly, "and see it through. I've got a hunch that something's going to turn up."

"But by stayin' here we may be losing time—and we haven't any time to throw away."

"What could we do if we weren't here?" asked Matt.

"You've got me now. This business is getting on my nerves so that it's hard for me to hold down a chair and wait. Feel like I wanted to be up and moving."

"You can go back to Phoenix, if you want to," suggested Matt, "and watch things there. I can hold down this end, all right."

"Not on your life!" declared Chub. "I'm goin' to stick to you tighter than a woodtick. If anything *does* happen here, maybe you'll need some one about my heft and disposition to help."

"Then," said Matt decidedly, "we're going to stay right here until something turns up. It's the only chance we've got to do anything for Clip."

"It's a slim enough chance, at that, but I'll go you," and Chub turned over and went to sleep.

Matt's resolution to remain in Prescott was somewhat shaken next morning. As he and Chub left

their room and walked out into the office the clerk handed Matt a telegram.

"Just came," said the clerk.

Matt knew the message had something to do with Clip, and his hands shook a little as he tore it open. It was a night-message, and had been sent from Phoenix the preceding afternoon. It was from Short, and ran as follows:

"Clipperton's case on Friday morning. No court Saturday. Will probably go to jury Monday afternoon. Need you as witnesses."

Matt's face went white as he read the message and silently handed it to Chub.

"They're making short work of poor old Clip," muttered Chub angrily. "We've *got* to cut loose from here now, haven't we?"

"I want to think about it," answered Matt, heading for the dining-room.

## CHAPTER XI.

### MATT MAKES A NEW MOVE.

Neither of the boys ate much breakfast. That telegram, showing how Clipperton was being railroaded through the court, had taken their appetite. Matt reflected bitterly that Clip was a quarter-blood—little better than a half-breed—and that the foregone conclusion that he was guilty must have prompted Sparling, the prosecuting attorney, to hustle the case through. There was evidence enough to convict him without hunting up any more.

Matt's first step, after breakfast, was to send a telegram to Short.

"Adjourn the case if you can. Must have more time. If anything is done, got to do it here. Can't you send some one to take our affidavits?"

Following this, Matt made a new move—one which he was sorry he had not made before. Leaving Chub at the Briggs House, he hunted up his friend Sheriff Burke.

Because of what Matt had done for law and order, Burke had a hearty admiration for him, and welcomed him cordially.

"I'm here on business, Mr. Burke," said Matt, "and haven't got much time to talk. You've heard about the robbery of Josh Fresnay, and about my chum, Tom Clipperton, being held for it?"

A sympathetic look crossed Burke's face.

"Sure I've heard about it," said he. "The trial's on to-day. I'm wondering, Matt, why you're not in Phoenix instead of here."

"I'm here trying to help Clipperton. I can't explain how, but that's the way of it. Short, Clip's lawyer, telegraphed me the case will probably go to the jury Monday. There's not much time to lose, and I'd like to have you send out some deputies to look for the real robbers, Mr. Burke."

Burke opened his eyes wide.

"Why," said he, "it looks like a clear case against Clipperton, and—"

"It isn't a clear case!" declared Matt warmly. "Day before yesterday the two men who robbed Fresnay were in the hills between Wickenburg and Skull Valley. That puts them in your county, Mr. Burke, and it's up to you to catch them, if you can."

"How do you know all that?" demanded Burke, a little excited.

"Because they chased me and my chum, McReady; but we were on our motor-cycles, and got away from them."

"What were they chasin' you for?"

Matt did not care to tell Burke about the tip which had brought him and Chub to Prescott. He got around the explanation in another way.

"Those two robbers, Mr. Burke," said he earnestly, "are two of Dangerfield's old gang."

Burke shot out of his chair at that.

"Are you positive of that, Matt?" he demanded.

"I am sure of it as I am that I am sitting here this minute."

"But those two scoundrels may be a hundred miles away from here by now!"

"I don't think so. I've got a firm conviction that they're hanging around in the vicinity of Prescott."

"They must have recognized you as bein' the governor's courier, that time we made the sourround at Tinaja Wells," said Burke, "and that's why they chased you."

Matt made no response to this.

"Will you try and locate them, Mr. Burke?" he asked.

"You bet I will—if for nothing more than to do something for you. You stack up pretty high with me, my boy, and if this is going to help any, I'll get right at it."

"Hustle!" said Matt. "If we don't dig up something to help Clipperton he's going to be convicted. And we've only got until Monday. They're not losing any time putting him through."

"Not much time to waste on a breed," returned Burke. "I know how it is. How long will you be in Prescott?"

"Can't tell. Not long, I hope."

"Where are you stopping?"

"Briggs House."

"If anything turns up I'll let you know. If you've gone back to Phoenix, I'll wire you. Keep a stiff upper lip," he added kindly, noting the gloom in Matt's face. "You seem to always win out when you tackle anything."

"There's got to be a first time for a fellow to fall down, Mr. Burke."

"Not for you, Matt," said the sheriff cheerily.

In somewhat better spirits, Matt returned to the hotel. Chub was in the office and was not long in

telling Matt that nothing had happened.

"You're the one, anyway, a messenger will be lookin' for," fretted Chub. "If anything's going to turn up, you'd better stay right here and wait for it. Where you been, Matt?"

Matt told him.

"That's a good idea," approved Chub, "but the deputies ought to have been started out right after we got here."

"That's one place where my foresight slipped a cog, Chub," said Matt. "I believe I'm getting batty over this business of Clip's. Any telegram from Short?"

"No."

Nor was any message received that day. Neither did anything else develop. The boys remained in the office until midnight, and then, with heavy hearts, went to their room and to bed.

"We're a couple of dubs for staying here like we are," said Chub. "Let's get on our wheels in the morning and roll back where we belong."

"We'll wait till Monday morning," said Matt. "If we can't find out anything by then we'll take the train that leaves here at nine in the morning. Our motor-cycles can travel in the baggage-car. I wouldn't feel like taking chances of an accident to the machines on that trip."

Chub brightened.

"That's the talk!" he exclaimed. "We'll wire Short to hold the case open till we get there, then you can butt in and tell every blooming thing you know about Clip and Pima Pete. Maybe it will help."

Matt was beginning to think that this was the only

thing to be done. If Clip wouldn't talk, then, at the last moment, it might be best for his friends to talk for him.

Next morning there was a whole column in one of the Prescott dailies about Clip. He had been arraigned, a jury selected, and the taking of testimony had begun. Before the closing-hour the prosecution had got in nearly all its evidence.

Fresnay had been put on the stand. He was made to tell about his ride in the red roadster, about his remark to the effect that he was going to Phoenix after the Fiddleback pay-roll, and then to describe the hold-up.

Welcome Perkins was forced to testify that Clip was in the roadster when Fresnay said he was going after the pay-roll, and was questioned about the half-breed who had stopped the cowboy's horse.

The paying-teller of the bank got in his evidence as to the amount of money drawn by Fresnay, and swore that it was all in double eagles.

Hogan and Leffingwell also added their mite to the evidence against Clip; and the money, and the dingy canvas bag, and the pouch were shown.

If Short accomplished anything on cross-examination, it did not appear in the newspaper record.

While the discouraged boys were reading and debating the court proceedings, a hack drove up with passengers from the train that had recently arrived from the south. Among these was Short himself.

Matt and Chub jumped up excitedly when they saw him. He nodded to them in his usual curt fashion.

"I've come up here just to get your affidavits," said he. "Our side will have an inning Monday morning, but it will be a short one. Let's go some place where we can

talk. Bring pen, ink, and paper."

Chub got the writing-materials, and Matt led the lawyer to their room.

"There's not much hope," announced the lawyer, when they were all in the room, "and I don't believe there'd be any hope even if we could make Clipperton talk. There isn't a white man who wouldn't believe the half-breed guilty on half the evidence brought out. If we could have butted into the prosecution with a sworn statement from Dangerfield, we might have had something to work on. But that's out of the question now."

This talk, from Clip's attorney, seemed to ring the knell of his fate.

"Could we do anything if we went on the stand?" asked Matt.

"You could do something for the prosecution," answered Short grimly. "When I saw the line the prosecutor was taking, I was mighty glad you weren't around. All I want from you, King, is a statement that Dangerfield wanted you to help Pima Pete dig up that gold. That will bear out Clipperton's story when I put him on the stand. You don't know anything about that, do you, McReady?"

Chub shook his head.

Short had arrived on the eight-o'clock train, and he had to leave at nine. By doing that he would reach Phoenix early in the afternoon, and he had matters to attend to that couldn't be looked after Sunday.

Having taken Matt's statement, Short conducted him to the office of a notary public, across the street from the Briggs House, and had the document sworn to.

Then, when they were back at the hotel and waiting



for the bus that was to take Short to the railroad-station, Matt told him about the second note received at Mrs. Spooner's, about the way he and Chub had been pursued on the road to Prescott, and about Sheriff Burke sending men out to look for the two horsemen.

"This is all promising," said Short, "but it doesn't lead anywhere. We've got to try and make the jury believe that Clip and Pete dug up Dangerfield's gold. Anything that helps that impression will do something for our side."

The bus was at the door, and Short got up to leave. Matt, his face white and haggard, walked with the lawyer to the door of the waiting vehicle.

"Hold the case open, Mr. Short," said he, "until the train that leaves here at nine o'clock Monday morning gets to Phoenix. If nothing comes of our work here, I'll be down, go on the stand, and tell *everything* I know. Clip won't like it, and it will make him my enemy, but you can count on me to do that if the worst comes."

The lawyer shook his head.

"I'll see that the case doesn't go to the jury until that train reaches Phoenix," said he, "but I don't think anything you can say will do any good. I've got here"—and he tapped the breast pocket of his coat where he had placed Matt's affidavit—"all you can tell about Dangerfield's gold. If you got on the stand, you might damage our case more than you'd help it. Good-by," and Mr. Short got into the bus and was driven away.

Saturday passed, and Sunday—blue days for the dispirited boys. Sunday night brought on a tremendous storm. Lightning flashed, thunder roared, and rain fell in torrents. It was to such an accompaniment of the elements that Motor Matt gave up hope of accomplishing anything for Clipperton.

"Lucky you told Short we'd come back to Phoenix on the train, Matt," said Chub. "It would be three or four days, after this rain, before we could get over the roads on the motor-cycles. Whoosh! Listen to that, will you?" A tremendous peal of thunder shook the walls of the hotel. "It doesn't rain very much around here, but when it does we get a soaker!"

Just at that moment Matt stepped to the table to put out the light before turning in. He had hardly leaned over the lamp before a pane of one of the windows crashed in and some object slammed against the foot-board of the bed and dropped to the floor. A spurt of wind and rain gushed through the broken window, and the light flared high in the chimney and went out.

"Somebody threw a rock!" yelled Chub, jumping out of bed and darting for the window with a blanket.

As soon as the hole had been stopped, Matt struck a match and relighted the lamp; then he went over to the foot of the bed and picked up a stone the size of his fist.

"Fine business," said Chub, "standin' out there in the rain an' shyin' rocks through a window! Who d'you s'pose did a thing like that?"

Matt, pushing closer into the yellow lamplight, showed Chub the stone: It was wrapped closely with twine, and under the twine was a folded paper.

"It's what we've been waiting for, Chub!" said Matt huskily.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE OLD HOPEWELL TUNNEL.

"Well, great centipedes!" gasped Chub, staring. "That's a nice way to hand a fellow a letter. Why didn't he get a cannon an' shoot it in! Suppose one of us had been in front of that window when the mail-wagon came through?"

Matt, his fingers none too steady, had been busy taking off the twine and getting at the folded paper. The paper was soaked through, and called for great care in opening it out. When it was finally straightened and laid on the table, this penciled message met the eager eyes of the boys:

"ole Hoapwel tunNnel 8 tirty muNdy morning Keap it quite"

"More news from our old friend that wrote the first note," said Chub. "He hasn't improved any in his spelling, and he handles his capitals like a Hottentot. Give us a free translation, Matt."

"It's plain enough," said Matt. "'Be at the old Hopewell tunnel at eight-thirty Monday morning. Keep it quiet.' Do you know anything about the old Hopewell tunnel, Chub?"

"Why, yes. It's a played-out mine. We passed it coming into town."

"Could you go there?"

"Easy."

"How far away is it?"

"About three miles."

"Good! Now let's go to bed and sleep—if we can. To-

morrow," and Matt slapped his chum jubilantly on the shoulder, "we're going to do something for Clip. I had a hunch all the while that if we waited long enough something would come our way."

"We'll be making quick connections with that nine-o'clock train, Matt. It's Moody's run, too, and I was going back on the engine."

"This rain hasn't hurt the going any if the Hopewell tunnel is out along the road we followed into town. Even Clip's machine can turn those three miles in six minutes. That's twelve, going and coming, with a margin of eighteen at the tunnel. I'm feeling better tonight than at any time since we struck Prescott."

Contrary to his expectations, Matt slept, and slept well. He had been so loaded down with worry that this ray of hope brought him a feeling of intense relief. It was that, no doubt, that calmed his excited nerves and gave him some rest.

He was up bright and early and rousing Chub.

"Turn out, you little runt!" he laughed. "See what a nice, large morning we've got for our work. We're going to get in some good licks for Clip—I feel it in my bones."

Chub hopped out of bed and took a squint through the window. The sun was up, the sky was clear, and everything was glistening with the wet.

"Seven-thirty," announced Matt, as they finished dressing; "that gives us half an hour for breakfast and plenty of time to get to the old Hopewell tunnel. Hopewell! That certainly sounds good to me."

At sharp eight they were on the road, picking their way around street puddles in the direction of the railroad-station. They were to cross the track, close to the station, and reach out along the good road, smooth

as macadam, for two miles, after which there was to be a little harder going across country.

The train from Phoenix was just pulling out for the north when they reached the tracks. The station-agent was out on the platform.

"How's Number Twelve?" yelled Chub.

"Thirty minutes to the bad," answered the agent. "She'll be along at nine-thirty."

"We're fools for luck, and no mistake, Matt," said Chub.

"That's the way with luck," returned Matt. "When it makes a turn it comes your way in a bunch."

The road along the railroad-track had perfect drainage, and it was already so nearly dry that the tires took firm hold without skidding. Even after the boys left the road and took a little-used trail across country, they were not bothered to any appreciable extent. The road was sandy, and had soaked up the moisture like a sponge.

It was a quarter past eight by Matt's watch when they came opposite a tunnel opening in the hillside. There was a platform of rocks at the mouth of the tunnel where the useless matter from the bore had been dropped.

"There's where we're going," said Chub, pointing to the tunnel, "but we're ahead of time and—"

"Well, maybe the other fellow's ahead of time, too," broke in Matt. "Let's go up and see."

Leaving their machines against the rocks, the boys climbed a twenty-foot bank and arrived at the mouth of the tunnel. There was no one waiting for them, and Matt and Chub sat down on a couple of boulders to pass the time until some one should come.

"Who are you expecting to see, anyhow?" asked Chub.

"Don't know," replied Matt, "but certainly it's some one who's able and willing to give us a helping hand."

"Yes; and then again, Matt, it may be those two men who tried to corral us at the break in the road. Burke hasn't found them yet, or he'd have told you about it long before this. Suppose they're working a dodge on us?"

This was a startling suggestion, but Matt wouldn't take any stock in it.

"You're forgetting the writing, Chub," said he. "That first note, and the last one, were both by the same fist. There's no doubt about it."

The time passed quickly—all too quickly for the anxious boys who were hoping for so much from their interview with the Unknown.

Eight-thirty came, then a quarter to nine, and Matt's spirits were fast falling, when there was a noise inside the tunnel. Both boys started quickly, and exchanged significant glances. The sounds were like the swishing fall of moccasined feet, and were approaching steadily along the dark passage.

Presently a swarthy face showed through the murk of the tunnel, and a roughly dressed man pushed into sight. Matt bounded up as though touched by a livewire.

"Pima Pete!" he cried.

A gleam darted through the half-breed's eyes.

"You savvy um, hey?" he returned. "You git um paper-talk, come plenty quick. Ugh! *Bueno!*"

Matt stood like one in a daze. He had not been

expecting to see Pima Pete, although he wondered later how he could have expected to see any one else.

"You know Clipperton's in trouble, don't you?" said Matt, suddenly getting control of his wits. "He's arrested, and being tried for stealing Josh Fresnay's money, and—"

"All same savvy," interrupted Pima Pete, waving his hand. "Savvy plenty before me leave Phoenix, send paper-talk to Motor Matt. How we save um? Clip heap fine boy. White men make um big mistake. You think um Pete better go Phoenix, give himself up?"

"You told us to be here Thursday," said Matt. "Why didn't you send word to us sooner?"

"Me no can make um. Find trouble. Two men b'long to ole gang make um trouble. No let um go to Prescott. They hike off last night, then Pete write um note, go Prescott, throw um note through window. Ugh! How we save um Clip? Odder two men want Clip to go to prison. Me no want um. What we do, huh?"

"Where are those other two men?" asked Matt.

"No savvy."

"Clip don't want you to come to Phoenix," said Matt. "If his lawyer can make the jury believe that you and he really dug up that gold, and that it was Dangerfield's, there's a chance. Understand?"

"We dug um, sure!" declared Pima Pete.

An idea rushed through Matt's head, an idea that called for quick work.

"If I write that out, Pete," he continued, speaking quickly, "will you make oath that it's correct."

"Make um swear? Sure. But how me swear, huh?"

"We'll have to bring a man out here—"

"No!" cried Pete, and drew back. "Me all same worth one thousan' dol'. You bring um man, he ketch um Pete. Huh! *Muy malo!* No like um."

"There'll be only one man, Pete," begged Matt, "and he couldn't capture you. Remember," he added solemnly, "if you don't make an affidavit there's nothing can save Clip!"

Pima Pete straightened up. His mind was none too keen, and he frowned as he thought the matter over. "Hurry!" urged Matt. "We haven't any time to lose. Clip saved your life when the deputy sheriff was going to shoot at you. Now's your chance to do something for him."

"All ri'," said Pima Pete suddenly. "You bring um man, me make um swear."

Matt whirled on Chub, his watch in his hand.

"It's five minutes of nine, Chub," said he, speaking hurriedly, "and here's what you're to do. Get on the motor-cycle and rush for Prescott. Send out that notary public who took my deposition—or any other notary you can find the quickest. Have him bring his seal along—don't forget that. We'll meet him at the road that runs along the railroad-track—"

"But what good'll that do?" interposed Chub. "Think I can do all that, come out here, and then both of us get back to the station in time to catch the—"

"Wait!" broke in Matt: "I've got this all figured out. After you start the notary in this direction, leave your motor-cycle at the hotel and go down to the station. If I can get there in time for the train, I will; if I can't, you get aboard, and when you see me along the road have your friend, the engineer, stop—"

"Stop! Jack Moody, with thirty minutes to make up! Why, Matt, he wouldn't stop for love or money."



"Then," and the old resolute gleam shone in Matt's gray eyes, "you stand ready to take Pima Pete's affidavit from me as I ride alongside the train on the *Comet!*"

"You can't do it," murmured Chub, standing like one in a trance; "you'll be—"

"I can, and I will!" cried Matt. "It's for Clip. Hustle and do your part and *I'll do mine!*"

Matt's very manner was electrifying. Chub caught his spirit and arose to the occasion in his best style.

"Count on me!" he yelled, and tore down the steep slope to the place where he had left the motor-cycle.

As Matt watched him, he mounted, started the motor with two turns of the pedals—half a turn was all the *Comet* ever needed—and was off.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### QUICK WORK.

Motor Matt's work was mapped out for him, and he had plenty to do. Whirling on the grim-faced half-breed, he dropped down on a boulder and pulled a small motor-cycle catalogue from his pocket. Ripping off the cover, which was bare of printing on the inside, he laid it on top of his leather cap, which he placed on his knees.

"This will be a queer-looking affidavit," said he, fishing a lead-pencil from his pocket, "but we'll have to make the most of what we have. You see, Pete, we're working against time, and every second counts. Now listen:

"You met Tom Clipperton in the hills, on the night of the robbery, and took him to the place where Dangerfield had buried his money. Then you dug it up, went back to the trail, and were set upon by the two deputies. Is that it?"

"Yes," nodded Pima Pete.

"Where did Dangerfield get that money?"

"He sell um cattle two month ago. Money heap heavy, him no like to carry um. Odder ombrays in gang mebbysso they get bad hearts, want to take um. Dangerfield say, 'Pete, we bury um; anyt'ing happen to me, you savvy where to find um' Ugh! me help Dangerfield bury um. He t'ink mebbysso when we ride to Mexico from Tinaja Wells, he dig up gold. But him captured. You savvy. Dangerfield send um note by big dog to Pima Pete, say for him, bymby, have Motor Matt take um money, send some to Emmetsburg, Iowa, Motor Matt keep some, Clipperton keep some.

Whoosh! Him bad business. No win out."

"And you will swear that all of Dangerfield's money was in gold double eagles, and that there was just ten thousand dollars of it?"

"Sure!"

Matt's pencil traveled rapidly over the paper. He was careful, however, to make the writing plain and to bear down hard.

"What's your real name, Pete?" asked Matt.

"Huh?"

Matt repeated the question.

"All same Sebastian," said the half-breed, catching Matt's drift, "Pete Sebastian, but me like um Pima Pete better."

Matt went back to the beginning of the affidavit and put in the full name, then dropped farther down and resumed his writing. Presently it was finished, and Matt looked at his watch. It was a quarter past nine!

What if Jack Moody, Matt suddenly asked himself, had made up some of his lost time? What if the train was already whipping along the rails on its way out of Prescott?

Matt leaped up frantically and grabbed Pete's arm. "Come on!" he called. "We'll go down toward the main road and meet the notary."

Pete drew back.

"Mebbyso somebody see um Pima Pete," he demurred, "mebbyso ketch um?"

"Take a chance, can't you?" flung back Matt. "It's for Clip! He'd do more than that for you."

Pima Pete hung back no longer, but scrambled down

the slippery rocks with Matt.

"You ride," Pete suggested, when they reached the motor-cycle, "me run along. Heap good runner. You see."

Matt followed out the suggestion, and in this way they reached the road. There was no sign of any rig coming from the direction of Prescott, and by then it was nine-twenty-five!

"See um smoke," said the half-breed, pointing.

Matt gave a jump as his eyes followed Pima Pete's pointing finger. An eddying plume of black vapor was hanging against the sky in the vicinity of the Prescott station. The smoke issued from a point that was stationary, and that meant, if it meant anything, that No. 12 was alongside the Prescott platform.

As he watched, scarcely breathing, the fluttering fog of black began moving southward. At that moment a horse and buggy appeared in the road, the one passenger in the vehicle plying a whip briskly. But the horse was tired, and moved slowly.

"There's the man we're waiting for!" cried Matt. "Come on! We'll meet him. I've got to have this acknowledged before that train gets here!"

Whether this was clear in Pima Pete's mind or not, was a question. But there was one thing too plain to escape him, and that was Matt's wild eagerness to get the work over with as soon as possible.

The two started down the road, Matt still on his machine and Pete running alongside. They could hear the low murmur of the rails, heralding the approach of the train, as they drew to a halt beside the man in the buggy.

"Well, if it ain't Matt King!" exclaimed the notary. "I

wasn't expecting to meet you this side the old—"

"Quick!" shouted Matt, handing up the paper. "Acknowledge that. I've got to get it aboard this train."

"You can't," gasped the notary, "you—"

"I *must!*"

There was a compelling note in that "must" which caused the notary to jab his spectacles down on his nose and begin, in a rapid mumble, to read off what Matt had written. The document began: "I, Peter Sebastian, otherwise Pima Pete, formerly one of the Dangerfield gang of smugglers."

In the excitement of the moment it is quite likely that those ominous words did not strike the notary with their full meaning. At any rate, he did not cease his droning mumble. As he read, he laid the paper down on his lifted knee, humped over it, and mechanically pulled a fountain pen from his pocket. Equally as mechanically, and while he was still reading, he uncapped the point of the pen. His seal was on the seat beside him.

Matt pulled a five-dollar bill from his pocket; also an empty envelope. He wanted to enclose the affidavit in a cover so as to safeguard the pencil-work.

"Hurry!" he called.

Jack Moody, on No. 12, was eating up the two miles that separated the Prescott station from that point in the road with tremendous rapidity. The rumble was growing louder and louder.

The notary was using the fountain pen.

"Do you solemnly swear," he asked as he wrote, "that this is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?"

"Ugh!" grunted the dazed Pima Pete.

"Yes or no!" roared the notary.

"Yes!" cried Pete, with a jump.

"There's your pay!" cried Matt. "Put the affidavit in that envelope, and be quick."

The notary had dropped his fountain pen in the bottom of the buggy, had pulled the seal to his lap, and was bearing down on the handle. The train was almost abreast of them, and the horse, tired though he was, made a frantic jump for the opposite side of the road.

Pima Pete rushed for the animal's head. The notary had come within one of going by the board, but he straightened up and tucked the document into the envelope.

Matt had turned the *Comet* so that it was pointing south.

"There's your letter," called the notary, as Matt came past.

Matt grabbed it, took it in his teeth, and dropped both hands on the grip-control. The last car of the train was opposite him, and the thick, acrid smoke of the engine streamed in his face.

Nothing daunted by the lead the limited had of him, he opened the *Comet* up for a record run.

It was to be the *Comet's* last flight—and it came within a hair's breadth of being Motor Matt's.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### STEAM VERSUS GASOLINE.

Motor Matt knew, as well as he knew anything, that there was more speed in the *Comet* than there was in Moody's big Baldwin engine.

Moody's running-time was perhaps forty miles an hour. He might, on such a favorable stretch of track, eat into his lost thirty minutes at the rate of fifty miles an hour, but he would hardly dare to do better than that.

Matt, on the other hand, could get sixty miles an hour out of the *Comet*, and even sixty-five if he had to in order to get that letter into Chub's hands before the good road jumped into the bog.

This meant that he had four miles in which to come up with the locomotive—for Chub was riding in the cab with Moody, and Matt, now that the smoke was behind him, could see his chum hanging from the gangway.

The morning sun had dried the road completely, but there was a dampness in the air, and damp weather is a prolific breeder of motor-cycle troubles.

If the *Comet* should begin to misfire on the high speed, if—

Dread possibilities began to flash through Matt's mind, but he thrust them aside. He was there to do his utmost for Clip, and to hope for the best.

Out of the tails of his eyes he glimpsed excited faces at the car-windows. The passengers were watching him as he passed the swiftly moving coaches. Naturally they could have no idea what his object was in racing with the train, but a look at his set, determined face

was enough to convince them that there was a deep purpose back of his work. Through the open windows ladies fluttered handkerchiefs, and men pushed out their heads and cheered him. It was a wonderful thing to see that gallant little machine close in on the rushing locomotive.

Two nerve-racking minutes had passed and two miles of the good road had been covered. This meant that Matt had but two minutes more in which to transfer his letter to Chub.

The *Comet* was alongside the baggage-car now, and Matt could see his chum plainly in the gangway. He was leaning far out, holding to the hand-rails with one hand and stretching the other toward Matt.

"Mile-a-minute Matt!" yelled Chub, in wild encouragement, "King of the Motor-boys! Come on, pard! A little farther, a little—"

Just then a hand gripped Chub's shoulder and yanked him back into the cab, while an angry voice commanded him to stay inside.

Matt saw this bit of byplay, and a thrill of apprehension shot through him. The engine crew were not going to let Chub take any chances of breaking his neck. Would they keep him from taking the letter?

But Chub himself had something to say about it. There was a scramble in the cab, and the red-headed boy ducked through the window on the fireman's side and reached the foot-board along the boiler. The fireman yelled, and his hand shot through the window after him. Chub, however, was quick enough to evade the gripping fingers. Holding to the hand-rail, he bent down. He was too high to reach Matt, and Matt would have had to come dangerously close.

The engine was pitching, and swaying, and swinging,



but Chub hung to the running-board like a monkey, moved along it quickly, dropped to the top of the steam-chest, and flung his right hand to the lamp-bracket, under and to one side of the headlight.

He could hear the fireman swearing at his recklessness and coming after him.

Meanwhile Motor Matt was whirling along abreast of the big cylinder.

"Ready?" he shouted; "look sharp!"

"Hand it up!" and Chub leaned forward, one foot in the air and his weight on the lamp-bracket.

Matt's right hand left the handle-bar, took the envelope from his teeth, and extended it upward.

"I've got it, pard!" shouted Chub, snatching the letter from Motor Matt's fingers.

A deep breath of relief and satisfaction flickered through Matt's tense lips. A hundred small things had conspired to make that race with the limited a success, and a turn for the worse in any one of them would have spelled failure.

But it was over and he had won. There was a chance for Clip.

Matt diminished speed slowly. The cars of the train began gliding past him, and the thick smoke covered him as with a pall.

He heard yells from the passengers. They were not cheers, but shouts of warning and cries of consternation.

What did they mean?

Matt could see nothing for the moment, the vapor from the engine shrouded him so thickly that it blanketed his view in every direction.

Nevertheless, he instinctively cut off the power and gripped the brake.

Yet it is doubtful if he could by any possibility have saved himself, even had he known the full extent and nature of his peril. The *Comet* was under such tremendous headway that a short stop was out of the question.

A frenzied whoop broke on Matt's ears. At almost the same moment there was a shivering crash, so quick and sudden it was more like an explosion than anything else.

It fell to Chub to see all this. His chum's danger loomed full on his stricken eyes.

With the letter, for which he and Matt had risked so much, safe in his pocket, Chub had turned and climbed from the top of the steam-chest to the foot-board.

In this position he was facing the cab of the engine, and looking back along the wagon-road.

Matt was completely engulfed in the smoke, and Chub could not see him; but Chub saw something else that made his heart stand still and sent a sickening fear through every limb.

With both shaking hands he hung to the rail that ran along the jacket of the boiler, dipping and lurching with the engine and staring back.

A big freight-wagon, drawn by six horses and manned by two freighters, was at a standstill in the road. The horses, frightened by the train, had plunged for the roadside, turning the huge van squarely across the trail.

The freighters were on the ground, hanging to the bits of the horses.

Chub, completely unnerved and his brain benumbed

with fears for Matt, stared at the huge wagon. The wheels of the vehicle were plastered with mud, for it had just labored through the bog and struck good road.

Could Matt, engulfed as he was in that haze of smoke, see the wagon? Certainly he could not *hear* it, because of the roar of the train; but could he see it, and would he be able to stop the *Comet* in time to avoid a collision?

So ran Chub's agonized thoughts. Although his brain seemed dazed to everything else, yet it was peculiarly alert to all that concerned Matt and his peril.

Then, while Chub stared into the receding distance, the sharp detonation of the crash reached his ears. A groan was wrenched from him, and his legs gave way. But for the timely support of the fireman he would have fallen from the locomotive.

Never had that particular fireman been so scared as he was then. He swore roundly as he dragged Chub to the cab and jammed him back through the window.

Chub fell in a heap on the heaving floor.

"You young fool!" roared Jack Moody, beside himself on account of the boy's narrow escape, "next time I take you in the cab with me you'll know it. I'd look nice facin' your father and your sister and tellin' them you'd dropped off my engine and been ground up under the drivers, wouldn't I?" And the exasperated Jack Moody said things to himself as he kept one hand on the throttle and the other on the air, and peered ahead.

Chub, half-lifting himself, caught Moody about the knees.

"Stop!" he begged: "there was an accident back there! Matt has been killed! Let me off! Moody—"

"Of course there's been an accident!" cried Moody,

without looking around. "Why shouldn't there have been? With two reckless daredevils playin' tag between a motor-cycle and a limited, it's a wonder there wasn't a worse accident than there was."

"Let me get off!" screamed Chub. "If you don't stop, I'll jump!"

"Sit down on him, Jerry," said Moody to the fireman. "If he won't act reasonable, lash his hands and feet. We're going to take him to Phoenix. I'm an old fool to have such a rattle-headed kid around. We're ten minutes to the good," he added, "and we'll drop into Phoenix not more'n five minutes behind the time-card. That's going *some*, eh?"

Meantime there were two amazed freighters, far back on the road, pulling a white-faced, unconscious boy out of a tangled wreck.

"Jumpin' gee-mimy!" muttered one of them, in consternation. "That two-wheeled buzz-cart butted into the wagon like a thunderbolt! Did ye see it, Nick?"

"See nothin'!" grunted Nick. "The leaders had me off'n my feet about then, an' I didn't have no time to observe nothin'. Did he hurt the wagon any, Joe?"

"Knocked the mud off the rear wheels. The wagon weighs twenty-five hundred, but she sure shook when the kid hit it. Fine-lookin' young feller," and Joe stood up and looked down at Motor Matt with a foreboding shake of the head.

"Killed?" queried Nick, stepping to his partner's side.

"His ticker's goin', but I don't see how he could come through a smash like that there an' live."

"Me, neither. We'd better load him inter the wagon an' snake him ter a doctor as quick as we kin."

"I'll pile up some o' the blankets so'st ter make him

comfortable. Wait a minit."

Nick climbed into the wagon and made a cushioned bed in the springless box: then, very gently, Motor Matt was lifted up and laid down on the makeshift bed.

Nick climbed down again and found Joe picking up scraps of the *Comet*.

It was a sorry wreck. The once beautiful machine, the pride of Motor Matt's life, was nothing now but a heap of junk.

"Purty badly scrambled up," remarked Joe. "Don't reckon it could ever be fixed. Shall we tote scrap inter Prescott, Nick?"

"Nary, I wouldn't. Leave the stuff whar it is. We got ter git the boy ter town as soon's we kin, an' hadn't ort ter lose time botherin' with sich truck as that."

So the horses were straightened around, Nick and Joe mounted to the seat, the long whip cracked, and the creaking freight-wagon, with its unconscious passenger, got under headway.

## CHAPTER XV.

### IN COURT.

Court had taken up after the noon recess. The evidence was all in, and the prosecuting attorney had made a masterly address demanding a prison sentence for Tom Clipperton. The prosecutor had so marshaled the evidence that there did not seem a possible hope for Clip. The jurymen looked convinced, and the defiant bearing of the prisoner, which at no time had appealed to their sympathies, was far from making such an appeal now.

Short was in despair. He was not the man, however, to throw up his hands until the jury had announced their verdict and had been polled.

Short had begun his plea at eleven o'clock. He could have finished by noon, but he was talking against time, and announced that he would complete his address after court reconvened.

The train from Prescott was due at one-thirty. One of his clerks brought him word that it was five minutes late. With one eye on the clock he continued to reiterate some of the remarks he had already made.

The jury looked bored, the prosecuting attorney, who did not know what was up, smiled sarcastically, and the judge settled back in his chair with a look of resignation.

Just as the hands of the court-room clock pointed to a quarter of two there was a stir at the door. A crowd of excited men surged through, a red-haired boy, haggard, his face and hands covered with the grime of more than a hundred miles in a locomotive-cab, led the crowd. The boy staggered as he pressed through

the room toward the enclosure.

"Evidence!" cried the red-haired boy huskily; "evidence for Tom Clipperton!"

There was a brief period of silence, during which the prisoner jumped to his feet and peered wonderingly at Chub McReady. Leffingwell, in charge of Clipperton, caught his arm and pulled him roughly back into his seat.

In another moment a buzz of excitement ran through the room, and was rapidly increasing to an uproar when the bailiff pounded for order.

"The room will be cleared," warned the judge, "unless we can have quiet."

Short, doubtful but snatching at a straw of hope, turned to the judge and requested that the case be reopened for the taking of further evidence. The prosecutor was instantly on his feet with an objection. Objection was overruled.

"I will call Chub McReady to the stand," said Short.

Another objection from the prosecutor. McReady's evidence was already in, according to the representative of the people, in the form of an affidavit.

Short begged to remind the learned counsel for the State that it was Matt King's affidavit that had been read in court, and not McReady's.

Objection overruled. Chub made his way unsteadily to the witness-chair, stood up while he was being sworn, and then dropped down in a way that showed how spent he was with recent efforts.

Fresh interest was injected into the case. The twelve good men and true in the jury-box were anything but bored now. Chub bore all the marks of having passed

through a trying ordeal of some kind, and it must have been in behalf of the prisoner.

In the dead silence that fell over the room while Short was impressively making ready to begin his examination, a piping voice floated through the intense quiet.

"Shade o' Gallopin' Dick! It's Chub, my leetle pard, Chub! Him an' Motor Matt hev been workin' their heads off to git evidence fer Clipperton, an' here—"

"Silence!" thundered the judge. "Officer," he added, "if that man makes any more disturbance, put him out."

Welcome Perkins subsided. The prosecutor frowned, and Short looked pleased. Something had got to the jury which would help, rather than injure, the defendant.

"Your name?" asked Short, facing Chub.

"Mark McReady," came the answer, in a voice that trembled from fatigue and excitement.

"Age?"

"Seventeen."

"Place of residence?"

"Phoenix."

"Occupation?"

"Inventor."

Somebody snickered.

"Waal, he is!" cried Welcome. "Dad-bing!"

The officer started toward the reformed road-agent, and Welcome ducked into a corner of the room and hid behind a fat man who hadn't been able to find a



seat.

"I will ask you to tell the jury, Mark," said Short, "just what you and Matt King have been doing in Prescott."

The prosecutor was on his feet like a shot, objecting, of course.

The judge knitted his brows.

"If it is pertinent to any evidence already introduced," decided his honor, "it can go in."

"It's an affidavit from Pima Pete!" quavered Chub, holding up the letter.

"Wait!" shouted the prosecutor.

"Don't speak, my boy, till I ask you something," said Short.

The prosecutor and Short got their heads together at the judge's desk, and the affidavit of Pima Pete was looked over.

"This is entirely relevant," declared the judge, "and we will have it read."

The affidavit was handed to the clerk, and he read the same in a loud, incisive voice.

The document stated, in clear, crisp terms, that the deponent was one Peter Sebastian, otherwise known as Pima Pete, that he had been a member of Dangerfield's gang of smugglers, told how Dangerfield had sold cattle and buried ten thousand dollars in double eagles, had intended to dig the money up on his way to Mexico, and had been captured before he could carry out his plans. The affidavit then went on to state how Dangerfield had requested Motor Matt to dig up the money for him, claiming that it was honest money, and send the lion's share of it to Dangerfield's father, in

Emmetsburg, Iowa; how Pima Pete had given a note to Clipperton, asking him to tell Matt to come for the gold; how Matt had refused to mix up with Pete, and how Clipperton had gone, had joined Pete, had helped dig up the gold, and how both had been set upon by Hogan and Leffingwell.

That affidavit, written by Motor Matt in a tearing hurry, was a model of clearness and brevity.

The prosecutor was on hand with a whole lot of objections, aimed at having the affidavit stricken from the record. In the first place, the affidavit was in lead-pencil. This was unusual, and would allow of changing its contents; in the next place, how were they to know that Pima Pete, a proscribed outlaw, was the real author of the document? And what credence was a half-breed entitled to, anyway, even when under oath?

By all these objections the prosecutor, to use a very figurative expression, "put his foot in it."

Short was obliged to show, by the witness, just how the affidavit had been secured, and an opening was made for the tale of pluck and daring in which Matt and Chub had just figured.

Chub, at times almost overcome with weariness and grief, told the story. It was a telling recital, and held the great roomful of people spellbound. The jurymen leaned forward in their chairs, the judge leaned over his table, everybody craned their necks and listened intently so that not a word might get away from them.

Chub told how he and Matt had made up their minds to do everything they could to free their innocent chum; how Matt had drawn from the bank some of the money paid for the capture of Dangerfield, and had declared he would use every last cent of it to free Clip, who had got into his trouble on Dangerfield's account; how they had gone to Prescott, after receiving the tip at

Mrs. Spooner's; how they had been chased by the two horsemen, and had got away by leaping the break in the road; how the weary days had dragged by in Prescott; how Matt had started Sheriff Burke to searching for the real robbers; how the note, tied to the stone, had been hurled through the hotel window on the night of the storm; and how the witness and Matt had gone to the old Hopewell shaft and met Pima Pete.

If the interest up to that point had been absorbing, it now became even more so.

Chub, in his quivering tones, went on to describe the meeting with Pima Pete, and Matt's plan for taking his affidavit, having a notary rushed out from Prescott, and then passing the document up to Chub on the Limited.

Chub had fortunately found the notary in his office; and in front of the office a horse and buggy were standing. He had hustled the notary off in short order, and had then gone to the station and taken the train, riding in the cab with Jack Moody, the engineer, who was a friend of the witness' father.

Just how Matt had accomplished the taking of the affidavit, Chub could not tell. All he knew was that when the limited dashed along the rails, some two miles out of Prescott, the notary, Matt, and Pima Pete were in the wagon-road, Pima Pete holding the notary's horse and Matt climbing after the train on his motor-cycle, the *Comet*, the machine Matt had won in a bicycle-race. Then Chub, mightily worked up himself and showing it in every word and gesture, proceeded to tell how he had tried to lean from the gangway and take the letter from Matt; how he had been thrown back by the fireman, only to get through the cab-window, hurry along the running-board, drop down on the steam-chest, and snatch the letter from Motor Matt's fingers. A sob came from him as he described

how, standing on the foot-board and gripping the rail, he had seen the freight-wagon in the road and had heard a crash as Matt had collided with it, being unable to see ahead on account of the smoke, and unable, even if he had seen his danger, to stop the terrible impetus of a motor-cycle going at the rate of a mile a minute.

Here, at the finish of his recital, Chub McReady broke down. In spite of the bailiff's half-hearted attempt to keep order, pandemonium broke loose. Susie McReady ran to her brother's side, and Welcome, nearly oversetting the fat man, tore through the shouting crowd to get to the witness-chair.

Finally, order was again restored, and Short, bland and mightily satisfied with the turn of events, asked the prosecutor to "take the witness."

The prosecutor had nothing to say, and Chub got down and walked wearily to a seat beside Susie and Welcome.

And Clip! The first real feeling he had shown he showed then. With his face in his hands he leaned across the table beside which he was sitting.

Short finished his plea. He did not consume much time, for he was an astute lawyer and knew when he had his jury with him. Jurymen are emotional, as well as any one else; they can weigh the evidence, but sentiment cuts a big figure in any jury's decision—just how big probably even the jurymen themselves do not know.

The judge's charge was brief. He asked the jurymen to weigh the facts irrespective of the impression the heroism of the prisoner's friends might have had on them.

And when the charge was finished, without leaving

their seats, a verdict of "not guilty" was rendered.

Then Bedlam broke loose again. Everybody crowded around Tom Clipperton to congratulate him.

But Clipperton, pushing his way through the crowd, started for the door.

"My pard!" he cried. "He's hurt, perhaps dead! I must get to Prescott."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### CONCLUSION.

Matt King opened his eyes in his old room at the Briggs House. The roar of the limited was still in his ears, and the awful grinding crash that he had last heard. Sheriff Burke was sitting beside the bed and there were innumerable bandages about Matt's body and a strong smell of drugs in the room.

"How's everything?" Matt mumbled, trying to sit up.

Burke gently pushed him back.

"Fine and dandy, Matt," said he: "but, best of all, is the way you got out of that smash."

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Burke?" queried Matt.

"Surest thing you know," laughed Burke. "That was a great race you made. Racin' the limited! First time it was ever done in these parts."

"Who brought me in?" went on Matt.

"A couple of freighters who were with the wagon you ran into. They thought you were going to turn up your toes, but 'Not for him,' says I. 'That boy,' I says, 'wasn't born to be snuffed out in a little smash like that.' But you've been unconscious for quite a while."

"How long?"

"Well, it's five o'clock now, and you had your race along about nine-forty, this morning."

"What's the matter with me?" demanded Matt, in consternation. "I'm not badly hurt, am I? I don't feel as though I was."

"Not a bone broken, and that's the wonder of it. You

hit that wagon like an earthquake, they say. You've had the skin scraped off you in several places, but the doctor says you'll be as well as ever in a week—providing there are no internal injuries."

"Well," said Matt, "there aren't any. I'd know it, I guess, if there was."

"I guess you would."

"Heard anything from Phoenix?"

"Got news that will make you feel like a fighting-cock! A telegram got here sayin' that Clipperton has been freed—"

"Glory!"

"McReady got there in time to flash the affidavit of Pima Pete's before the case went to the jury; but the telegram says it wasn't the affidavit that turned the trick so much as the grit and determination of you and McReady in getting the document to Phoenix."

"But Clip's innocent! Everybody's got to know that."

"Everybody *will* know it, too," averred the sheriff. "The two men who took the money from Fresnoy were captured by three of the men I sent out on your tip. They brought the rascals in, not more than an hour ago, gold and all—not early enough to free Clipperton, but in plenty of time to set him straight with anybody who still had a doubt of his innocence. I wired the news to Phoenix an hour ago, and McKibben and some more people will be up on to-night's freight."

There seemed to be nothing more that Motor Matt could wish for. But he roused up from a reverie to ask after the *Comet*.

"That motor-cycle," said Burke, "is a mass of junk. You've had your last ride on it, Matt. You did a lot of good work with that machine."

"But the best work I ever did with it," said Matt, "I did this morning. What I accomplished for Clip was worth the price. And Chub! Talk about pluck and grit, he showed it if ever a fellow did."

"You both showed it," said Burke. "One of the captured scoundrels, Torrel by name, has turned State's evidence. He told me all about everything. Says he, and the fellow with him, have been staying at the house of a Mexican in Phoenix, ever since the Dangerfield gang was put out of business. They knew Dangerfield had buried ten thousand dollars in gold, not far away in the hills, and they knew Pima Pete had been let into the secret of the cache. They were in Phoenix watching Pete. A Mexican, belonging to the place where the two outlaws were staying, carried a note to you that had been given him by Pete. This was after the robbery—"

"But how did Torrel and his pal know about the payroll money?" interposed Matt. "If they were watching Pete in order to locate Dangerfield's gold—"

"That's right," broke in Burke, "I'm getting a little ahead of my yarn. Well, they heard from some one that Fresno had come to town after the ranch-money. That gave them the idea they could make a rich haul without bothering with Pete, so they went out in the hills and made it. They learned, next morning, that Clipperton and Pete had been captured, that Pete had got away, and that circumstances pointed to Clipperton as the thief—Clip and Pete; see?"

"Then Torrel and his pal came back into Phoenix. That was the time they got next to the note sent by Pete to you. The Mexican messenger had read it. The real thieves knew at once that Pima Pete was planning to save Clip, and, naturally, Torrel and his pal didn't want it that way. If Clip and Pete were believed guilty, then the real thieves could enjoy their loot without



having the authorities bother them. So Torrel's pal tried to bluff you out by sending the Mexican with a warning. You wouldn't be bluffed. The two scoundrels laid for you in the hills—and you showed them your heels."

"What did Torrel and his pardner want to hang around Prescott for?" queried Matt. "Why didn't they skip when they had a chance?"

"They were expecting to meet another of the old gang at the old Hopewell tunnel. They went there to meet him, and found Pima Pete. Then they held Pete a prisoner in the tunnel until they thought the law had taken care of Clip, got word that the man they were waiting for was in Maricopa, and pulled out early Sunday night, in the storm. That was the last of them, and their move once more gave Pete a free hand, for since that money of Dangerfield's had been taken in charge by the State as that stolen from Fresnay, they had no reason to hold Pete."

"What about the fellow at Maricopa?"

"I wired that town and an officer went after him. But the man will not be caught—I'm positive of that."

"Have you captured Pete?"

A queer look crossed Burke's face.

"I reckon I could have captured him, if I'd tried to right hard," said he slowly, "but I didn't try."

"Why not?"

"Well, he showed himself a good deal of a man, for a half-breed, and I'm not hungry to make a thousand off of him."

Matt reached out his hand and gave the sheriff's big paw a cordial grip.

"I'm glad you feel that way," said he. "I can't explain, but what you say does me a lot of good."

It was half-past ten that night before the Phoenix delegation arrived in Prescott.

McKibben and Leffingwell came, and Clip, and Chub, and Welcome Perkins, and—last but not least—Susie. Susie was going to take care of Matt until he was well enough to dispense with a nurse.

It is useless to dwell on the meeting of these friends with Matt. Clip's dark eyes expressed his feelings, and henceforth only death could wipe out the close friendship born of recent exciting events.

In a week, so well was Matt looked after, that he was up and around—not quite as full of ginger as ever, but rapidly getting back into his old form.

He had more money in the bank, too—even after Short had corralled the \$500—than he had before Clipperton had got into difficulties. Some of Dangerfield's gold came to him—Matt would only take enough to offset Short's fee and other expenses—and there was a "rake-off" from the \$2,000 Burke received for the capture of Tolliver and his partner.

Motor Matt, when he went back to Phoenix, found himself more popular than ever. He had lost the game little *Comet*, but it was only a start for higher things in the motor line. Just what these things were, and the fame and fortune they brought to Motor Matt will be touched upon in the next story.

THE END.

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OR,

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NEW YORK, March 20, 1909.

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# THE TENNIS-GROUND MYSTERY.

By OLIVER K. ROSSE.

It was about half-past six, one brilliant morning in June, and the boys of Bidford School were dressing themselves, preparatory to "scudding" for the river, wherein to take their customary seven-o'clock "dip." Every one was out of bed, skipping to and fro, as lively as grasshoppers, throwing wet sponges at one another, and indulging in divers other jocular vagaries, which sufficiently accounted for the many strange noises and the repeated loud bursts of laughter that greeted the listening ear.

The inmates of dormitory number one were the younger members of the school, and the merriest and most popular of all were Caggles and Bottlebury.

"I say, Bottlebury," cried Caggles, a youth who had a deal of confidence in his own powers, "I'll swim you this morning, and 'lick' you by a dozen yards."

"All right," said Bottlebury; "but you can bet your life I'll have the laugh on you! I've been putting in a lot of practise lately."

"That's what you always say, 'Bot,' old bird."

"Well! it's right enough. Whoop! Here's a black beetle in one of my shoes!"

"Don't kill it! It's mine," cried a lanky youth, dashing forward.

"Look here, Fuzzy, you beast," said Bottlebury, "you'll get punched until you're black and blue if you

bring such disgusting creeping reptiles up here."

Fuzzy was an amateur naturalist, and delighted to keep a stock of living insects about his person, in pill-boxes.

"This fellow got loose," he said, as he fearlessly picked up the coal-black beetle and popped it into the small cardboard prison which he had ready.

"I say, 'Cag,'" resumed Bottlebury, "it's our turn to roll the tennis-ground."

"So it is," said Caggles; "won't it be hot work if the sun hangs out all day!"

"I should say so!" assented his friend. "I say, though, you were dreaming like a madman last night."

"Was I?" laughed Caggles; "I'm an awful fellow to dream. I used to walk in my sleep, but I've got over that. They say it comes of having an active brain."

"Aye; and they say that kids with active brains like that generally turn out to be tip-top poets and authors."

"Do they?" said Caggles, suddenly imagining himself a budding genius.

"Oh," said Bottlebury, with delightfully refreshing candor, "I don't suppose it means anything in your case, you know."

"Why?" asked the disappointed Caggles, in an injured tone of voice.

"Well, I don't think you've got enough brains for 'em to be active. It'll be active nerves in your case. It's just the same, only it's different; see?"

"Was I talking in my sleep?" asked Caggles, anxious to change the subject.

"I think so. I just caught something about 'moles,'



but I went to sleep pretty soon after."

"Well, I've been wishing for a mole," said Caggles; "Tupman says they've got no eyes, and I say they have. I'm going to hunt for one of the little beggars, just to see who's right."

At that juncture the door was flung open, and Crieff, one of the oldest boys in the school, rushed into the dormitory, red and breathless, and minus his cap.

Now, Crieff was usually a very sedate fellow, and went about as stately as an Oriental grandee. His neck was rather long, and at every stride he stiffened his legs and bulged out his chest, so that he was suggestive, somewhat, of a dignified stork.

The boys of the dormitory were astonished, therefore, to see him in so breathless and limp a state.

"What's up?" asked Caggles, with mouth agape.

"The tennis-ground!" gasped Crieff, mopping his face with a handkerchief.

The tennis-ground at Bidford School was reputed to be one of the finest in the whole neighborhood. It had been specially laid, and its smooth surface was as level as a billiard-table. Every boy was proud of it, and Crieff tended it with the anxiety of a father.

"What's up with it?" asked two or three voices.

"Spoiled! Ruined!" said Crieff, almost with tears in his eyes.

"Never!" cried Bottlebury.

"It is. Somebody has dug holes all over it with a spade. I've just been down and seen it."

"It was all right yesterday afternoon," said Caggles, with an expression of disgust on his face.

"Some one must have done it in the night," said

Crieff; "I believe it's one of those village kids I thrashed last week for throwing stones."

"Very likely," said Caggles; "they'll do anything for spite."

"They used our spade, too," continued Crieff; "the one out of the shed. The lock of the door has been useless for some time, you know. They must have gone in and taken out the spade; I found it lying on the ground."

The inmates of the dormitory stood aghast. A grand match between themselves and a neighboring school had been fixed for this coming Saturday. Under the peculiar circumstances this, of course, would have to be postponed.

Hastily finishing their toilet, the boys accompanied Crieff to the tennis-ground, where they saw that his account was only too true. The ground was dug up in a dozen places.

Exclamations of rage rose from the fast-increasing crowd of boys, and energetic discussions were entered upon, until quite a confusing uproar prevailed.

"Whoever it was," said Caggles, almost bursting with wrath, "they ought to be kicked."

"I say, Crieff," said Bottlebury, "do you think they'll come again?"

"I don't think so," was the answer; "still, they may. I'm just trying to think of a way to catch the scoundrels."

"Put a lot of rat-traps about," suggested a small boy.

"Man-traps, you mean," said Caggles.

"Yes; that's it—man-traps," said the small boy.

"Where'll you get 'em from?" asked Caggles, as if

bent on calling down derision on the youngster.

"Oh, anywhere—buy 'em," replied the small boy, in a vague way.

"But where from, you young ass?"

"Where they sell 'em;" and the small boy fled in time to miss Caggles' foot.

"Well," said Dumford, "if there's a doubt whether they'll pay us a second visit, it'll be hardly worth while sitting up all night."

Suddenly Caggles gave a cry of extreme pleasure.

"I know a good plan," he said; "I'll get a ball of strong, thin twine, fasten one end to the spade in the shed, carry the ball across the field, and up-stairs to the dormitory, and then tie the other end to my big toe. If any one walks off with the spade, the string will pull my toe and waken me. Then, down-stairs we go, and ask the midnight visitor if he wants any help."

Crieff laughed.

"It's a good idea," said he, "and there's no harm in trying it. It may answer and it may not. The schoolhouse isn't a hundred yards away."

"Very well," said Caggles, with a gleeful chuckle, "I'll get the twine and try it to-night. Let's roll the ground. They'll very likely to come again if they see we've patched it up."

This was done, the twine purchased, and that night Caggles got into bed with his toe attached to one end of the string and the spade in the shed tied to the other.

Poor Caggles! He little thought what a laugh there was to be at his expense.

For a considerable time the inmates of No. 1 dormitory lay awake in a state of anxious expectation,

half-expecting to see Caggles dragged out of bed and go hopping down the room, with his big toe nearly pulled out by the roots, so to speak. But nothing happened, and one by one they closed their eyes and went to sleep, until all were wrapped in slumber. Even Caggles—despite the uncomfortable sensation of the twine round his toe—was not long in succumbing to drowsiness, for he was very tired, having rolled the tennis-ground all that afternoon.

Just as the faint sounds of the schoolroom clock striking one floated up-stairs, Bottlebury woke with a start, having dreamed that he was falling down a coal-mine. He wiped the perspiration of fear from his brow, rubbed his eyes, and sat upright. Then, turning his gaze in the direction where Caggles always slept, he saw by the light of the moon, which streamed in at the window, that his chum was not to be seen.

His bed was empty!

In an instant Bottlebury was on his feet.

"Wake up, you fellows!" he cried, as he dragged his trousers on. "Wake up! D'you hear?"

Dumford popped up his head and asked what the row was over.

"Caggles isn't in bed," said Bottlebury excitedly; "he's felt the string tug, I s'pose, and has hurried off without us."

In another minute every boy had donned his nether garments, and then away they went, pell-mell, down the darkened stairs.

As they rushed outdoors they descried a figure, clad in naught but a night-shirt, making for the tennis-ground.

"Why, that's Caggles!" said Dumford.

"What on earth has he come out like that for?" queried Bottlebury; "he'll catch his death of cold."

"Make no row," warned Dumford. "It strikes me there's something peculiar about this affair. Let's follow him quietly."

Caggles made straight for the shed, and, opening the door, disappeared inside.

In a few seconds he reappeared with the spade in his grasp, and, walking up to the tennis-ground, began to dig.

The onlookers gasped with amazement, and a light dawned on their minds.

"He's asleep," whispered Dumford; "it was nobody but he who dug the ground before."

"By Jove!" was all that the astonished Bottlebury could say—so unlooked-for was the revelation.

Suddenly Caggles was seen to fall to the ground. The twine had twisted round his legs and thrown him.

Bottlebury was quickly at his side and assisted him to his feet.

"What's this?" said Caggles, in great bewilderment, the fall evidently having brought him to his waking senses.

"Come along in," said Bottlebury; "you'll catch rheumatics, or something."

Caggles looked, in a dazed way, first at the spade and then at his now grinning companions.

"Did I do it?" he asked.

"I suppose so," replied Bottlebury; "but what in the name of goodness made you? What were you digging for?"

"Moles," said Caggles, after a slight pause, in which

he shivered with cold; "I—I suppose I must have come out to look for moles."

And so he had. The assertion made by Tupman that moles were blind had caused him to long to test the truth of the statement. He even dreamed of the subject, following which a somnambulistic desire to dig for moles in the tennis-ground was born within him.

He never heard the last of the ludicrous adventure, and Bottlebury had a thorough good laugh at him.

The nocturnal mole-hunter thenceforth slept in a small room by himself, with the door securely locked and a patent "catch" on the window, "so that"—as some one facetiously remarked—"he should not again have necessity to tie spades to his toes."

# MAKE QUEER CATCHES AT CAPE COD.

Many strange fish come to the nets of the weirsmen of Cape Cod. The collection of the amateur photographer who summered at Provincetown a season would not be complete without a plate of some of them to show wondering friends on winter evenings.

Most striking, perhaps, would be the giant horse-mackerel, which were often seen.

"Four-hundred-pounders each" they were, according to the offhand estimate of the local old salt who named them for the summer folks edification. They were indeed a handsome couple, although only medium-sized representatives of a marine clan—*orcynus thynnus*—of which hundreds are annually taken at Provincetown in the big "catchalls," commonly termed weirs.

In a small way, the horse-mackerel is a gladiator. Prior to his advent, the sand-lance, the mackerel, the herring, pollock, and dogfish make regular visitation in Cape Cod Bay.

When the breaching "sea-tiger," or horse-mackerel, with great goggle eyes staring stonily and lemon-hued, rearanal fins glittering goldlike in the shadow of its under body, comes rushing upon the scene, all minor species hurriedly decamp.

The horse-mackerel, or its familiar, is common in the Mediterranean, where it is known as the tuna, or tunny. For centuries the flesh of the tuna has been highly esteemed by the Latin races. Packed in oil, or salted, it has, since the days of the Phœnicians, been a very widely known commodity in the Mediterranean trade.

The horse-mackerel occurs in the west Atlantic as far north as the Gulf of St. Lawrence. It puts in an appearance at Provincetown early in June customarily, remaining in the vicinity until about October.

When much of the fishing-work there was performed by means of nets, the horse-mackerel was both a source of revenue and a pest to the small boatman; but the oil taken from it more than compensates for the loss resulting from its ravages upon nets.

One would suppose that the fishermen's nets would speedily be ruined by the creatures, but such is not the case. Upon striking a floating net, the horse-mackerel goes, bulletlike, straight through it—unlike the shark, which, rolling itself in the netting, tears the same enormously—making a clean, round hole, easy to repair.

Individuals weighing as much as 1,500 pounds have, it is said, been taken. Specimens of that weight are not taken off Provincetown, however, the average specimens weighing from 400 to 500 pounds, with an occasional 900 or 1,000-pounder.

The average length is about eight feet.

Horse-mackerel were seldom, if ever, used for food in this country until within a few years. At present quite all specimens taken in weirs are sent to city markets, where a ready sale at a good price is assured among immigrants from the south of Europe.

No horse-mackerel need now be set adrift as worthless, as was formerly the custom.

Usually the capture of a weir-imprisoned horse-mackerel is not a matter of great difficulty. Once in a while, however, the great strength of an individual nearly prevails over the efforts of its jailers. For instance: In July, 1897, Captain Henry J. Lewis, a



skilful weir-manipulator, found in his harbor trap a big horse-mackerel, exhausted and apparently dead upon the dried-in "lint" when the crew gathered in the netting.

The disengaged end of the main throat-halyards was made fast to the tail of the supposedly dead fish, the bight was loosely attached to the main-sheet traveler, and Skipper Lewis and his helper straightway began to bail in herring.

All at once the stern of the boat settled. Down it went, suddenly, and water began to pour into the standing-room. The horse-mackerel had regained consciousness and was making the fact known.

Mate James hurriedly unloosed the halyards, and the immense fish disappeared below the surface and renewed its fight for freedom.

As the fish scurried away, the halyards tautened. The main-gaff started aloft, drawn by the hoisting-gear. The gaff-end caught, held securely for a moment, then broke, and up in a trice went the bellying sail, with broken spar dangling.

For a moment all was confusion on the boat. The fish, a 900-pounder, in one of its rushes approached the boat's quarter. One of the crew, ax in hand, delivered a swinging blow at him, but the agile horse-mackerel easily avoided it.

An instant later the strong wind struck full upon the bagging canvas and laid the boat over, well upon her side. A capsize seemed imminent. Correctly sizing up the situation, Mate Manuel James seized a sharp knife and with one stroke severed the halyards.

Immediately the horse-mackerel, with all but a small portion of the main-halyards tied to its tail, vanished like a flash through the broadside netting of the weir,

vanished for good. Lewis, owner thereof, gave vent to sundry explosive ejaculations.

Cape Cod weirs scoop in many unexpected water-creatures. Recently a forty-foot-long—estimated—right-whale entered O'Neil's head of harbor Provincetown floating traps. Annoyed a half-hour later by would-be captors, this huge animal, bearing within its mouth baleen worth probably \$2,000, with one rush burst through the heavy netting and went away to sea, leaving a badly torn weir behind.

In August, 1908, a baby finback whale, just out of leading-strings, evidently, it being only fifteen feet long, entered Blatchford's weir and was slain. The creature was exhibited under a tent upon the main beach.

The Lewis-James weir captured, October 9 of the same year, a bone shark seventeen feet long. The skin of that rare creature was removed intact, and is now being tanned for mounting by the purchaser, David C. Stull, known as the Ambergris King.

This species—*cetophinus maximus*—a native of Arctic seas, is one of the largest of sharks. Sluggish in movement, the bone shark swims lazily at the surface, apparently indifferent to the approach of boats. Food found in its stomach comprises a red, pulpy mass, probably the roe of sea-urchins. The teeth are small—the Stull specimen hadn't the vestige of a tooth, being very young—and the gill-rakers—a sort of Galway whisker worn inside, instead of outside, the throat—would indicate that it feeds at the surface, straining its food, as does the baleen-bearing whale.

A half-dozen years ago a West Indian sea-turtle, with a plump remora—sucking fish—adhering to its under shell, was taken from the "Jim" Lewis weir.

Very recently the largest lobster known to have been

captured in Provincetown Harbor was taken from the Eastern weir. Its weight was twenty-three pounds, and its length, tail end to outer end of forward extended claws, was forty-two inches. This giant crustacean, carefully mounted, now graces Mr. Stull's museum of marine curios.

Recent sizable lot arrivals of fishes once deemed worthless at Provincetown, include the shadine, scientifically known as *etrumeus sadinia*, a species which occurs as far south as the Gulf of Mexico, but is most commonly found in Florida and Carolina waters, and the species variously called saury, billfish, skipper, and skipjack, the latter because of its surface-bounding habit when pursued by the horse-mackerel and bonito.

The shadine appeared at Provincetown for the first time, and in large numbers, in October, 1908. They are very valuable.

The saury, or billfish—*scomberesox sauris*—is found in all parts of the North Atlantic. Cod feed voraciously upon them. This long-beaked, slender-bodied species feeds upon soft, pelagic animals, its teeth being very minute.

This species, formerly considered worthless in Provincetown, has suddenly leaped into favor. All caught there are eagerly sought by New York and Boston commission men.

## COLD FIRE.

Cold fire is a coming invention. So also is heatless light. You may find them in nature already, if you but inquire intelligently into her secrets.

Cold flame is exemplified in the firefly, and the glowworm gives forth heatless light.

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When man shall attain the perfect vacuum, then the rude ether blush of the electric-light bulb will give forth many times more light, purified and heatless, soft and healing as the light of the stars, penetrating as the sun. An examination of the firefly, when emitting flames or light, shows bodily movements that cannot be understood to mean anything else than vacuum producing.

The lights are always seen in the vacuum sac on the back. Immediately before emitting light, the insect will flatten the body, draw the legs in, droop the head, seemingly contracting in all directions; then with the relaxation comes the flame and light. The bodies of the glowworm and firefly always are transparent when filled with flame. The blades of grass or other debris are seen plainly through the bodies. Here are cases of nature anticipating man and dealing with X-rays.

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