

Deal in Wild Lands

OR, THE
Fight for the Musselshell Millions.

BY LEON LEWIS.

CHAPTER X.

AT BATTLESAKE RANCH.

Let us now take a long step forward to see what was doing in Montana. At about 8 o'clock on a fine summer morning, Col. Harvey Whipsaw, of Battle Lake Ranch, sat in an easy chair on the front veranda, engaged in looking over a somewhat bulky mail of letters and newspapers, which had just been brought him from the nearest postoffice by a trusted factotum.

"It's strange," he muttered, "that I do not hear from Hiram Skidder. Can he have failed to get my letter? Or have I failed to allow sufficient time for it to reach him?"

A troubled look crept into his countenance as he continued his task.

The appearance of the Colonel was as striking as his name, he being one of those hardy, clean-limbed pioneers who were seen nowhere in greater perfection than in the Rockies.

He was not only a renowned Indian fighter and scout, with an excellent sword, but he was also a high-toned and cultured gentleman, despite his plain features and his still more primitive way of living.

He had even been more renowned as a magistrate than as an officer of the army, and this fact will attest that he was highly intelligent and many-sided.

"I asked him to telegraph me the moment my letter reached him," added the factotum, "and he has not done so."

"I have just received a telegram from Mr. Wynans," he said, motioning his guest to a chair, "and I recall him well as a young man who passed a couple of days with me several years ago. As you will see by this message, he is now at no great distance on his way to us."

Baker glanced at the telegram, a sigh of relief escaping him.

"I am glad he has taken this stand," he declared. "I have been wishing all the morning I could get a line to him. The truth is, this man Gaddler is one of the worst miscreants I have ever encountered. He has been robbing Mr. Wynans for months and years, and is now taking out of the two mines about six thousand dollars every day. He has discovered that I have been in the neighborhood ever since last Wednesday, and has reached a very clear conception of the purpose of my visit. In a word, he is aware that I am in possession of all his nefarious secrets, and he swears that I shall never return to Perry Wynans to tell what I know."

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"No, sir, thanks to the speed of my horse," replied Baker. "As my assailants were a dozen to one, I would have stood no chance at all if I had not been well mounted. Ah!"

He raised his hand warningly, listening with an air of keen interest.

"There they are," he remarked as a confused clatter of hoofs resounded from a distance. "The villain has mustered his forces anew and is coming here to kill me."

"You just sit where you are for the present," Mr. Baker, enjoined the Colonel, quietly slipping a revolver into his right hip pocket. "I'll take a look at these people, and see what their business is in this quarter."

Seizing an ax which stood behind his writing-desk, the Colonel sauntered out in the direction of the bridge we have mentioned, with the air of a man who is proceeding to his timber.

enough to support any weight likely to be placed upon it.

Over this bridge at a furious pace came the stranger, his eyes fixed intently upon Colonel Whipsaw, and in a few moments more had drawn rein beside him.

"Am I right?" asked the newcomer hurriedly. "Is this Colonel Whipsaw?"

"It is, sir."

"Are you the Colonel?"

"I am."

"Then I can do no less," continued the stranger, slipping to the ground, "than appeal to you for assistance. As you see, I have barely escaped with my life from Sam Gaddler and a number of his men, who have made an attempt to murder me."

"Why?" asked the Colonel.

"Because I have been spying out what they are doing at the mines," explained the stranger. "My name is Baker—Charley Baker. I am a mining expert by profession, and was sent out here by the real owner of the Musselshell mines, a man named Perry Wynans."

"Exactly," interrupted the Colonel, with a start. "Come into the house, Mr. Baker. I'll send your horse to the stable."

Placing a metallic whistle to his lips, the Colonel blew two or three peculiar notes, and then motioned the fugitive to enter.

"Many thanks, Colonel," said Baker, "but I must warn you that you will get into trouble if you champion my cause. Sam Gaddler is very bitter against me, and swears that he will kill me."

"Never mind that," returned Col. Whipsaw, with another graceful wave of the hand. "Will Gaddler pursue you?"

"I cannot doubt it."

"That's a good reason, then, for accepting the shelter of my house. Walk in."

The Colonel's factotum had now made his appearance, a bright-eyed, herculean young man of one and twenty, and the Colonel proceeded to give him a few rapid orders in a tone too guarded to reach even the newcomer's hearing.

"And put this horse in the stall next to mine," Ned, added the Colonel. "Leave them both saddled and bridled."

Ned nodded obediently, and hastened away with the horse, while the Colonel led the way into the dwelling.

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"Out of my path, then," enjoined Gaddler. "You cannot keep us parleying here while the rascal escapes. We must have him!"

"You won't have him till you have told me what he has done," remarked the Colonel, as quietly as before. "What do you want of him?"

"What? We propose to kill him!"

"What for?"

"Because he has been sent out here from Chicago to interfere with me," declared Gaddler, with the air of finding it a serious task to restrain his impetuosity. "In a word, he's a sneaking, meddling spy."

"He's nothing of the sort," affirmed the Colonel. "He is an honorable man, who was sent out here by another honorable man, to learn what you are doing with a valuable property to which you and Jerry Skidder do not have the slightest claim! I may add that he has found out all he desires to know, and that he and his employer will soon put an end to the lawless career you and your intended father-in-law have been running in this region!"

Sam Gaddler sat glaring at the Colonel as if at a loss in finding words in which to express his anger.

"So you dare to champion this man, do you?" he at length demanded.

"I do, sir, and I must now ask you to vacate these premises, they being mine. You'll advance another step in this direction at your peril!"

The reader can readily imagine what sort of a tumult was occasioned by this unexpected resistance.

"Kill him!" cried one.

"Ride him down!" shouted another.

"Get off this bridge, all of you," commanded the Colonel, retreating quietly across it, as he brandished his axe warningly. "Not a step more!"

"Oh, we shan't worry about you, Colonel," interrupted Gaddler, putting spurs to his horse. "We'll not only have our man but we'll take you with him, if necessary, and have you both as make-weights from the same limb!"

"Hold!" shouted the Colonel, flourishing his axe again. "You cannot cross this bridge!"

"And why can't we?" asked Gaddler.

"Because it has been keyed and braced in such a way that one blow from this axe will suffice to tumble it into the river," explained Whipsaw. "If you take another step, therefore—"

"Head him off, Gilly," interrupted Sam Gaddler, addressing one of his followers, with a significant gesture.

Too late!

The blow from the Colonel's axe descended at the very instant he reached the inner end of the bridge, and in that same instant the whole structure went down with a tremendous crash into the deep and narrow gorge beneath it.

The yells and denunciations that arose from the Colonel's assailants can be imagined.

A couple of horses were killed and two or three limbs were broken, in addition to which every man was obliged to struggle out of the stream as he could, and the cries and threats with which this task was accomplished made up a scene resembling pandemonium.

The Colonel did not wait, however, to note the results of the measure he had taken, but beat a rapid retreat to his residence, shutting himself in.

"Well, Mr. Baker," he announced, "the rascal's having begun a war, I have given them a touch some of them will doubtless remember, tumbling them into the river. That bridge, you see, was built in the early days, when redskins and road agents were about equally dangerous, and it was so constructed by the original occupant of these premises that it could be instantly demolished without losing a single timber, they being all fastened together. He looked it down repeatedly, but this is the first time I have had occasion to do so."

"Of course they will be furious," returned the mining expert, seizing his rifle. "Doubtless," admitted the Colonel, "as he also armed himself. But I have scored a first advantage by letting down that bridge and we will score others before they drive us from the peninsula."

By the time the couple had made all snug around them, Sam Gaddler and several of his chosen spirits struggled up the bank, and took their way cautiously toward the house, at length gaining the shelter of a large pile of wood between it and the river.

"And now to give it to them hot and heavy," muttered the leader of the assailants. "If we don't kill them both, it will be because there is no virtue in bullets."

"We need not linger upon the details of the fight that succeeded. Thanks to the shelter both parties had secured, not the least injury was accomplished during the first half hour, except that every window, with most of the sashes, had been broken out of the Colonel's dwelling."

"This will never do," at length growled Sam Gaddler. "We must set the house afire, whatever the cost or risk. Can you manage it, Dakin?"

"I can at least try, sir."

The ruffian tried so well, taking advantage of certain shelters and angles afforded him, that it was not long before he had kindled two fires at the side of the dwelling and one on its roof.

"That will do the business, Cap," he reported, as he returned to the shelter of the wood-pile, despite the bullets that were sent after him. "We can shoot them if they come out to extinguish the fire, and if they don't come out they'll be roasted!"

The situation had, indeed, become a bad one for the gallant defenders.

"The house is sure to go," remarked the Colonel, after listening a moment to the roar of the flames.

"What a pity that I have got you into this trouble!" said Baker's answer.

"Never mind that," said the Colonel. "Another house can be readily built if we make our escape, and these chaps can all be sent to prison for a good long term when we once get hold of them. I think now is a good moment to give them the slip and go the stable. With a start of a few moments we may be able to secure our horses, which are saddled and bridled, and so make our escape across the river."

The attempt was duly made, the couple slipping out by a side door, and

they had the good fortune to reach the stable before the assailants caught sight of them.

"They see us," exclaimed Baker, as the cries of the enemy announced the fact. "We must be lively!"

Fortunately there was a side door to the stable, and no time was lost by the couple in availing themselves of this door to make a bee-line for the river, at full gallop, heedless of the instant pursuit and the shower of bullets by which their flight was accompanied.

"Of course there is a chance against us while we are crossing the stream," exclaimed the Colonel, as he led the way into the water. "Keep close to me, Baker. There is a sort of ford here, if we don't miss it. These horses have often practiced this swim, and will make us no trouble."

He dodged involuntarily as a number of balls whistled past the couple, some of them dangerously near, but the start had been well taken, and the fugitives were out of the river before their assailants had reached the opposite bank.

"We might dispute their passage," said the Colonel, "and could certainly reduce their number before they reach this bank, but the odds and risks are too great for us to make a stand here. It will be better for us to resort to guerrilla tactics, making a stand only when everything is in our favor."

"Set fire to that shanty," Sam Gaddler was heard shouting, with a gesture toward the stable, "and be quick about it. I want to run the pair down during the next twenty minutes," he added, in a lower tone, addressing one of his favorites. "In order that I may go to Custer to intercept a couple who are coming to the Musselshell. Be lively now, all of you, and I shall soon be able to start upon my proposed journey."

A hearty response was given him, and in another minute his ruffians had crossed the stream and were galloping furiously after Colonel Whipsaw and Baker, who had dashed away with the air of men who know that they are menaced by a terrible peril.

CHAPTER XI.
INTO EVIL HANDS.

By the time Elffe Howard and Perry Wynans, accompanied by the motherly Mrs. Rankle, were well out of Chicago, their souls had become joined in the tenderest respect and affection.

"How odd it seems, Mr. Wynans," the former could not help saying, "for me to be going on such a long journey with you!"

"But not so odd as pleasant—for me, at least," was the reply. "I hope that the journey upon which we have entered will last as long as we live."

Elffe's face grew more intense in its coloring, a glad, tender light appearing in her soulful eyes.

"I hope so, too," she said, simply.

The silence which succeeded was so full of happiness that it lasted many minutes, during which the train continued to roll onward.

"And all this time we forget that Jerry Skidder is on this same train with us," at length murmured Elffe.

"And also his daughter," suggested Mrs. Rankle.

"Not to speak of Hiram Skidder and his two hopefuls," remarked Perry, with a smile of content. How very little we care for them!"

"Perhaps the two brothers will make up their differences before the night is ended," pursued Elffe. "I dare say they are in a good way to unite all their forces against us."

"In any case, we need not give them a thought," said Perry. "Fortunately they are not in the same car with us, and if they were we could remain in the state-room."

He reflected a few moments intently, and then resumed:

"Did you know—Colonel Whipsaw didn't—how kind he was to me during my visit to the Musselshell, although I didn't give him any very definite idea of my business in that quarter? Well, I must send the Colonel a few lines by telegraph before our arrival, and it will be well to also tell our mining expert, Charley Baker, that we shall soon be with him. Charley is one of my old schoolmates, with whom I have always remained more or less closely associated, and I am sure you will be pleased to make his personal acquaintance."

"We need not linger upon their journey to St. Paul, nor upon the longer one between St. Paul and their destination. Let it suffice to say that the lovers and Mrs. Rankle remained the most of the time in the seclusion of their own state-room, and they did not so much as catch a glimpse of the Skidders during the whole trip Westward."

At about 1 o'clock in the morning on the fourth day after leaving Chicago, the little party alighted from the train at Custer.

"It's an awkward hour for one's arrival," remarked Perry, with a glance at the covered sky, as he drew Elffe's arm within his own on reaching the ground; "and there is a still more awkward ride before us. I wonder if there will be a hack in waiting at such an unseasonable hour?"

"Carriage, sir?" said a man, who came hurrying up to the couple, with a dull-burning lantern.

"Yes," replied Perry; "where is it?"

"Yonder, sir."

The man not only pointed out the vehicle but led the way toward it.

"That will answer," said Perry, after a glance at the carriage. "This way, Mrs. Rankle."

He hastened to assist his companions into the vehicle, and then sprang in lightly himself, shutting the door.

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver.

"I'll tell you that later, after we have crossed the river," answered Perry. "Shall we be able to ferry across at this hour of the night?"

"Certainly, for at any other hour so long as you are willing to pay well for the service."

"Drive on, then," ordered Perry. "Our first step is to cross the Yellowstone at the junction."

The driver looked the party over a moment, with an air of suppressed jubilation and excitement, and then mounted briskly to his box and drove away into the darkness, concealing his lantern beneath him.

"It's not far to the river, I suppose?" queried Perry, after a brief silence.

"No, sir; a mere step."

The "step" proved to be a long one, but at length the carriage was driven upon a low pier, and from the pier cautiously assisted into one of those small, shabby ferry boats which are still so commonly in use on Western rivers.

"That's all," said the driver; "there's no one else coming."

The ferry boat proceeded to get under way, and hardly a word was spoken until it had disembarked its passengers upon the opposite side of the river.

"Is it not strange that we saw nothing of the Skidders?" asked Mrs. Rankle.

"Rather," replied Perry. "I can only suppose that they have gone on to Billings, because we talked of going there. In good truth, that would have been almost as handy for us, as far as the mines are concerned, but my objective point is the those deeds on record."

"Where to, sir?" asked the driver again, appearing at the side of the carriage.

Perry reflected a moment.

"Your horses are fresh?" he then asked.

"Yes, sir; ready for anything."

"You do not care how far you go, I dare say?"

"Certainly not, so long as you are ready to pay me liberally."

"Then take the road to Musselshell, and do not let the grass grow under your feet for the next two hours."

"All right, sir."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

RUSSEL SAGE SCORED.

Joseph Choate Turns the Shafts of Satire Upon the Modern Shylock.

Mr. Choate was not in his usual humor when he began to stun, in the case of William G. Laidlaw against Russel Sage for \$50,000 damages for injuries sustained by the explosion of dynamite in Sage's office three years ago, when Norcross dropped a bomb upon being refused a satchel full of money by the astute old Wall street sharp.

Mr. Choate said: The counsel for the defense has admitted that Laidlaw honestly believed in his narration of what occurred in connection with the explosion. I won't give Mr. Sage the benefit of any such admission on my part. Mr. Sage has been engaged for years in a calling which hardens the heart and blunts the moral sense. He is a money lender, a note slaver, a stock gambler. He says to this man "go," and he goes; to this broker "come," and he comes, and to this banker "shell out," and he shells out. It is an honest man on one side and a dishonest man on the other—confessedly so.

Sage sat looking at Choate without a wince. Choate went over near him and talked down at him as he shook his hand almost in the face of Sage, and said:

"On the witness stand he was shuffling, evading, prevaricating, skulking, dodging, and sneaking."

There was not a twitch of a feature of Sage at this or when Choate fell back, and still pointing at him said:

"Oh, he knows he owes his life to Laidlaw. He spoke the truth in the drug store. Every one knows it who has heard the testimony in the case. Sage was the only one who was not seriously injured by the explosion. Why, he was shaving himself at the end of the fourth day, and beginning to shave others again at the end of ten days! Look at him! Seventy-eight years old, and keener than the average man on his jury. He wasn't hurt at all. I appeal to these immortal trousers and the debris of the coat tails which were mixed up with the debris of the table on which Sage gently subsided."

Mr. Choate then swung the trousers which Sage had worn that day. He said it was not possible to account for the want of injury to Sage except on the supposition that the missiles which would have gone to him had struck Laidlaw. Mr. Choate turned and said: "This trial is not between Sage and this poor man Laidlaw. It has become a trial between Sage and the Judges and courts of this State. I have been often asked how I can afford to spend my time on this case in behalf of this penniless man when the compensation is so little commensurate with the labor. They are trying to tire him out by appeal. I'll stand by him if it takes twenty trials before this man Sage is brought to the bar of justice."

There was applause, but Justice Patterson said he would punish any person for contempt who applauded.

"Thank God," said Mr. Choate when running over the evidence, "there are some members of the bar that this man of millions has not got under his control. People are afraid of this man of millions. Witnesses are afraid to come into court against him."

Mr. Choate said that the action would die with the death of either Laidlaw or Sage, and that Sage "would spend many thousands of his ill-gotten millions" to win the case. He had retained an astute lawyer, who had loaded the case down with exceptions for another appeal.

A Question of Balances.

The French-Canadian is not without a considerable sense of humor, and they highly appreciate the following story, told of a prosperous baker in a town not far from Quebec.

The baker was in the habit of buying his butter in pound balls or rolls from a farmer with whom he did a great deal of business. Noticing that these butter balls looked rather small, he weighed them, and found that they were all under a pound in weight.

Thereupon he had the farmer brought before the magistrate and accused of dishonest practices.

"These butter balls," said the judge to the farmer, "certainly weigh less than a pound. Have you any excuses?"

"I have," answered the farmer.

"And have you weights?"

"No, no weights."

"Then how can you weigh your butter balls?"

"That's very simple," said the farmer; "while I've been selling the baker butter, I've been buying pound loaves of bread from him, and I used them for weights on my scales."

CHAPTER XI.
THE FIGHT THAT SUCCEEDED.

The approaching horsemen came on so rapidly that they encountered the Colonel as soon as he had crossed the little bridge leading to his dwelling.

At their head rode Sam Gaddler, the suitor of Daisy Skidder, and the superintendent of the mining operations which had been carried on in Perry's name by her father.

He not only realized the description Daisy had given of him, in her conversation with her father, but he was even more formidable than one would have been led to suppose from her remarks, his height being six feet two, and his shoulders and chest being unusually massive.

"Ah, there you are, Colonel!" he cried, without the least salutation or preliminary. "Have you seen anything of a horseman who came this way rather rapidly only a few moments ago?"

"Here's the tracks of the fellow now, Sam," suddenly spoke up one of the men by whom Gaddler was accompanied, pointing them out. "You see that they lead directly over the bridge to the Colonel's dwelling."

"Sure enough," exclaimed Gaddler, his face beaming with delight. "We are on the right track, it seems."

Turning to Colonel Whipsaw, he continued:

"You see, therefore, Colonel Whipsaw, that it will not be of the least use for you to deny that you have seen the man in question."

"Have I made any attempt at denial?" returned the Colonel, quietly enough, although there was a steely gleam in his eyes that might have served his questioners as a warning.

"To be sure—no, you haven't," Gaddler avowed frankly. "Then you mean to say that you have seen him?"

"I do."

"Where is he?"

"He is just now under the shelter of

the house," said the Colonel. "I have just received a telegram from Mr. Wynans, and I recall him well as a young man who passed a couple of days with me several years ago. As you will see by this message, he is now at no great distance on his way to us."

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"I am glad he has taken this stand," he declared. "I have been wishing all the morning I could get a line to him. The truth is, this man Gaddler is one of the worst miscreants I have ever encountered. He has been robbing Mr. Wynans for months and years, and is now taking out of the two mines about six thousand dollars every day. He has discovered that I have been in the neighborhood ever since last Wednesday, and has reached a very clear conception of the purpose of my visit. In a word, he is aware that I am in possession of all his nefarious secrets, and he swears that I shall never return to Perry Wynans to tell what I know."

"I see your clothes are badly torn, Mr. Baker," said the Colonel. "Are you seriously hurt?"

"No, sir, thanks to the speed of my horse," replied Baker. "As my assailants were a dozen to one, I would have stood no chance at all if I had not been well mounted. Ah!"

He raised his hand warningly, listening with an air of keen interest.

"There they are," he remarked as a confused clatter of hoofs resounded from a distance. "The villain has mustered his forces anew and is coming here to kill me."

"You just sit where you are for the present," Mr. Baker, enjoined the Colonel, quietly slipping a revolver into his right hip pocket. "I'll take a look at these people, and see what their business is in this quarter."

Seizing an ax which stood behind his writing-desk, the Colonel sauntered out in the direction of the bridge we have mentioned, with the air of a man who is proceeding to his timber.

"The approaching horsemen came on so rapidly that they encountered the Colonel as soon as he had crossed the little bridge leading to his dwelling.

At their head rode Sam Gaddler, the suitor of Daisy Skidder, and the superintendent of the mining operations which had been carried on in Perry's name by her father.

He not only realized the description Daisy had given of him, in her conversation with her father, but he was even more formidable than one would have been led to suppose from her remarks, his height being six feet two, and his shoulders and chest being unusually massive.

"Ah, there you are, Colonel!" he cried, without the least salutation or preliminary. "Have you seen anything of a horseman who came this way rather rapidly only a few moments ago?"

"Here's the tracks of the fellow now, Sam," suddenly spoke up one of the men by whom Gaddler was accompanied, pointing them out. "You see that they lead directly over the bridge to the Colonel's dwelling."

"Sure enough," exclaimed Gaddler, his face beaming with delight. "We are on the right track, it seems."

Turning to Colonel Whipsaw, he continued:

"You see, therefore, Colonel Whipsaw, that it will not be of the least use for you to deny that you have seen the man in question."

"Have I made any attempt at denial?" returned the Colonel, quietly enough, although there was a steely gleam in his eyes that might have served his questioners as a warning.

"To be sure—no, you haven't," Gaddler avowed frankly. "Then you mean to say that you have seen him?"

"I do."

"Where is he?"

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