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$500 REWARD.

"That isn't a bad reward!"

"No; if a fellow could catch him, he would make pretty good wages. Let's see," and the second speaker began to read the postal card that the postmaster at Hard Scrabble had just tacked to the door of the store that constituted the "office," so that every one might read:

TAKE HIM IN!

$500 Reward will be paid for the arrest and delivery of Hiles White to the sheriff of Tonto county. He is about twenty-five years old, six feet tall, and slim, with light complexion, and has a big scar on the right side of his face. He is wanted for murder and other crimes. If killed in resisting arrest the reward will be paid on satisfactory proof of his identity. When last heard from was mining for his Tonto Basin cousin.

By the time the reader had finished, a crowd of half a dozen or more men surrounded him.

"Now if that feller is headed for the Tonto Basin country it wouldn't be much of a trick to take him," said the first speaker reflectively, as if debating with himself the advisability of making the attempt.

"If you bear me, he ain't goiner to be taken in, and the feller that tries it is going to have his hands full. They have been after him for two or three years and ain't got him yet. They say he's right on the shoot," remarked another of the crowd.

"Well, a feller ought to know him as soon as he sees him from that description," hazarded the first speaker, "if he got up close enough to see the scar, and then all he'd have to do would be to turn loose at him if he didn't throw up his hands when you told him. Besides, nobody but him would try to cross over the mountains into the basin with this snow on the ground. Blamed if I don't think I'll go after him."

"Well, somebody ought to round him up," asserted some one in the crowd; "he's been foolin roun hyah long enough, jes' havin his own way, worse as if the country belonged to him. Derned if I wouldn't go with you, Hi, if I didn't have to take this grub over to the boys in camp."

"Well, if any of you want to go, all right. I'm going," replied the man addressed as Hi.

It was not the first time that Hi Lansing had been on such expeditions. He was one of those men for whom danger seems to have a fascination. At his remark Frank Crandall, a young fellow who had been standing quietly by, volunteered to accompany him. The crowd turned toward him with more interest than they had thus far evinced during the entire proceedings. It was but a few months since he had come among them, fresh from the east, to take charge of one of the mines which had been closed down by the winter's storms. For weeks he had been cooped up in the isolated settlement, and he hungered for something to break its monotony.

"Well, get your horse and gun and come," replied Hi, and in an instant the two men had left the room to arm and equip themselves for the chase, while the bangers gathered around the stove to discuss the probabilities of their success. In a few minutes the two men rode past the door, each armed with a rifle and six-shooter, and the crowd, stepping out, bade them goodby, with the oft repeated warning, "Be keerful and don't let him get the drop on ye."

The crust of the unbroken snow cracked crisply under foot as the two rode on fast, leaving the little settlement in their rear. For some time neither spoke, but at last the silence was broken by Lansing asking his young companion, "Did you ever try this kind of thing before?"

"No," replied the young man, "I never have."

"Well, then, you want to be keerful. If you don't lose yer head, you're all right. The only danger is that we may run on him before we know it."

"And if we do, what then?" asked the young man.

"Well, he will probably commence shooting, and if he does, and you ain't hit the first rattle out of the box, why you want to git off'n your horse and git behind something and shoot back. If ther' ain't anything to git behind, keep your horse between you and him and keep a shoot in. Whatever you do, don't let go your gun. But arhat we want to do is to see him first, and then we've got the play on him, and all you have to do is to tell him to throw up."

"And if he don't throw up?" asked Crandall.

"Why, then you let him have it. The reward will be paid just the same."

The apparent indifference with which Lansing spoke of the entire matter, much as if he were discussing the best method of hunting a wild animal, touched the young man; but he had committed himself too far to withdraw. Besides, he had that feeling that all men have when they are young—the curiosity to know whether or not he could rely on himself when danger threatened.

"We should strike his trail on the hills here, if he is really headed for the basin country," said Lansing. They had been riding for several hours in silence through the snow, unbroken by sight save the scattered pines that here and there shot up in serried ranks through the snow, and the mountains through whose passes the man whom they were after would have to pass in his search for safety to the land settled with white people.

As the two men rode along, scanning the ground on each side for the snow covered mass, Lansing suddenly wheeled his horse to the right, and when Crandall joined him he pointed to a narrow trail where two horses had passed through the snow.

"There it is. He's driving one horse and leading another, and he hasn't passed by very long either. See, the snow hasn't had time to drift in it," said he.

With the discovery his whole demeanor had changed. A new look came into his eyes and his voice sounded at strange. He even grasped his weapon in a manner different to that he had heretofore displayed. "He's right ahead, and we want to look out," the older man continued as they began to follow the trail. As they approached the summit of each hill they would stop their horses, and Lansing would dismount and crawl to the top so that he might look, without being discovered, into the valley beyond, in order that they might not come on the fugitive too suddenly.

They had traveled this way for several miles, when, reining in his horse, Lansing pointed to what seemed an old road leading off to the right of the one they were following, and said:

"That's the 'cutoff' into the basin. I thought he would take it, but he probably doesn't know the country. You had better take it and ride on ahead until you strike the road we're on again. Then, if you can't find his tracks, you had better side back to meet me until you do. I will follow the trail up."

The young man tried to expostulate with Lansing for the great risk he was assuming in thus following the trail alone, but his companion was obdurate, and cutting the argument short by again warning the young man to be on his guard, he rode on, following the trail in the snow, while the younger man, finding objection useless, took the "cut off" road. He had no difficulty in following it, and wondered why the man they were in pursuit of had not taken advantage of it. The whole pursuit seemed almost like a dream to him. The snow, unbroken save by tracks of game, stretched away mile after mile in every direction, with here and there a pine through whose branches the wind seemed to sob and sigh, making the only noise that broke the stillness of the wintry afternoon. It added to this feeling. Not a thing in sight. He began to depict in his own mind the moment of meeting the man pursuing. He had almost forgotten his name.

After all, what had the man done that he, Frank Crandall, should be seeking his blood? Perhaps, like himself, the man had mother and sisters to grieve over any misfortune that would overtake him. These and a hundred kindred thoughts passed through his mind. The sun was fast declining as he passed from the "cutoff" into the main road again. The air was getting chilly with the coming of evening, and the snow in the distance took on colors of pink and purple where the rays of the setting sun touched the mountain peaks. He scanned the main road eagerly to see if the man they were in pursuit of had passed, but the snow that covered it was unbroken.

Then he rode back on the main road in the direction from which he had come, to meet his comrade and the fugitive. He had just ascended one of the many rolling hills when in the distance he discovered a man riding one horse and driving another. At the sight his heart almost stood still. He dismounted, and leading his horse to one side concealed him in a clump of young pines. Then he returned to the roadside and waited. The man was urging his horses forward, but they seemed to be worried and made but slow progress. Crandall felt his heart beat faster and faster at the length of time it took the man to reach him.

He examined his revolver and rifle, cocking each, to see that they were in order. It seemed to relieve the tension of his nerves. After he had done this, he knelt down so that he could fire with surer aim, and waited. He did not care much now whether the man resisted or not. If the fugitive resisted, he would have to stand the consequence of resistance. It was nothing to him. He could hear the footfall of the approaching horses in the snow, and he cocked his rifle so as to be ready. The setting sun shone full in the man's face, but Crandall began to look for the scar that the sufferer had said was on the right cheek, although he had resolved to do so particularly.

When he first discovered the fugitive he scanned the road behind him to discover Lansing, but the nearer the man approached the less Crandall cared whether Lansing came or not. He let the man approach nearer and nearer, so that his aim would be the more accurate. He could not afford to throw away the first shot. The face of the man grew more and more distinct. He seemed to be oblivious to his surroundings. Crandall felt almost disposed to let him pass, for the thought that every one would think him a coward if he did so spurred him on, and, rising erect, he ordered the man to surrender.

The horse that the man was driving in front of him, frightened at Crandall's appearance, swerved from the road, leaving the two men facing each other. For an instant Crandall locked straight into the other's eyes. Then the man raised his rifle from the pommel of the saddle, and Crandall fired. The horse which the man was riding swung from the road and at the same moment the rider's gun was discharged. The smoke from Crandall's own gun blew back into his eyes, and he turned from it to follow the movements of the man at whom he had fired.

As he saw the man still erect in his saddle, he felt the feverish desire to fire again come over him that now fled when they have shot, and reloaded, and know that their life may be the forfeit of their failure. He threw another cartridge into the chamber of his rifle, and raised it to his cheek, but before he could fire the man reeled from his saddle and fell, while his frightened horse galloped off through the pines.

Crandall stepped toward him, pulling his rifle prepared to fire again, if necessary, but he did not fire as the man raised his hand and said simply:

"Don't fire—you've got me."

The snow was already red with blood where he lay. For the first time Crandall looked for the scar that the description said was on the right cheek. For an instant he did not see it, and his heart seemed to stop beating with the fear of having made a mistake, and when on facing nearer he saw that it was there, that only the pallor which had spread over the man's face had made it indistinct, he could have cried out with joy at the feeling of relief that passed over him.

"Are you badly wounded?" he asked.

"I don't know how bad it is. It is down somewhere," the man said, placing his hand on his breast as if not certain of the exact spot. "It feels numbness," he added. Stooping down Crandall unbuckled and took off the man's joint belt and threw it into the snow, where lay his rifle, and then he tore open the man's shirt. As he did so his fingers came in contact with the warm blood, and he involuntarily drew back with a feeling of disgust.

"Did you find it?" asked the man, who was watching him closely, and who had observed the movement.

"Yes," replied he, by the time he had recalled to himself by the question. Crandall again tore at the shirt, exposing the breast. Where the blood did not cover it it looked like marble, despite the dark hair on it. He could not see the wound on account of the blood until he had wiped the latter from the breast, and then he found it.

"When do you think of it?" the man asked.

"There it is," replied Crandall. He could not say more. The appealing tone in the man's voice for some hope—some encouragement—made him feel faint and sick.

"What do you think of it?" the man repeated in a querulous voice, and as he did so he coughed until his mouth filled with blood, and he spat it out on the white snow.

Crandall shook his head and walked toward where his horse was tied. He felt that if he watched the wounded man any longer he would faint. Noticing his walking away, the wounded man said:

"For God's sake, don't leave me. Now that you have killed me, stay with me, and don't let me die like a dog."

The voice was one of entreaty, and Crandall returned and seated himself in the snow by the man's side. The sun had gone down and the twilight had come on, bringing with it the chill of night. Crandall covered the wounded man's body with his overcoat and raised his head from the snow. Almost unconsciously he noted that as the patch of red made by the blood grew larger and larger, the face of the wounded man grew whiter and whiter. He never took his eyes from Crandall's face, while his breath came quicker and shorter, as if he breathed with labor. With each breath the blood seemed to bubble from the wound in the breast.

One of the man's hands fell from under the coat that covered him. As Crandall raised it from the snow its coldness sent a chill through him. Once in his life he had asked the wounded man if he could do anything for him, but the man had only shaken his head in reply. Crandall felt like reviling himself for what he had done, and wondered why the wounded man did not reproach him. Even when he expressed his sorrow at having shot him, the dying man said gently:

"Don't mind it. It's too late now."

The twilight gave way to darkness, and still he sat there. He could not hear the dying man breathe without leaning over his face. He did not do this but once, though, and then the dying man had opened his eyes and looked up into his face inquiringly. Crandall would rather have stood there until morning than to have caught that look again.

Suddenly he heard a voice call to him. He started as if he had been fired at, but it was only Lansing. As he answered the call Lansing came forward, and seeing the outstretched form on the snow said:

"By God, you got him!"

"Hush!" replied Crandall, fearful lest the wounded man would hear the exulting tone which grated on his own ears as nothing had ever before done. But not minding the admonition, Lansing dismounted, and striking a match held it close to the man's face. It was pale and cold and the half opened eyes stareglazed. They did not even reflect the light made from the match, but from the partly opened mouth a tiny stream of half congealed blood seemed to be still flowing down over the beard.

"That's him, and it's a pretty good day's work we have done by earning that reward," said Lansing coolly as the match went out.

Somehow, though, as Crandall lay awake through the night within a few yards of the body, to keep the wolves from it so that it would be unmarred in the morning when they would lash it to a horse and take it into the settlements for identification, he wondered why Lansing could sleep so soundly. As for himself, the rigid form covered with only a saddle blanket, lying where the snow was red instead of white, was always before his eyes, even when he closed them.—Harley O'Neill in Argonaut.

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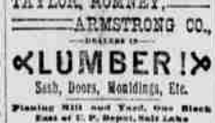

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