

## THE GHOST RAFT.

A YARN OF SPIRIT LAKE.—BY "NOMAD."



THE typical hunter and trapper of sporting writers, in his thoughts and actions, his goings and comings, his perils, privations and pleasures, is a personage who in real life does not exist, never did, and never will exist. He is an ideal, a writer's composite portrait, a blending of the best traits of a whole race of men who in the past trapped and hunted and scouted over all the American continent. Like the stage "Paddy" he is an impossible man, yet he is, as it were, a popular idol, especially with young readers. To do the best writers justice, their pet creation is certainly very picturesque, and his alleged actions frequently possess an absorbing interest. He is the personification of strength, grace and agility—a man of wondrous speed and tireless endurance, with an eye that can pierce at will, air, fluid, or solid, and with an ear that is jarred by the twang of a straightening blade of grass. This ideal man has nerves that never quiver, courage that never wavers, face as honest as the day, a locomotive constitution and an india-rubber, steam-heated heart. He carries a rifle that never misses. He may also have a hound or two with more sense than most men, and he invariably loves them and his rifle, or "piece," as it is generally termed, better than ordinary mortals love their own flesh and blood. His favorite occupation is *observing* things—seeing with "eagle eye," understanding with "massive brain," the wondrous page of Nature, and preaching with impossible tongue of the advantages of poverty, freedom of forest, versus wealth and luxurious comfort in the sinful shadows of "them 'tarnal city cañons."

In real life, this wonderful hunter is generally just an easy-going old cuss,

with a weakness for tobacco and no principles against taking a drink. He is frequently superstitious and seldom educated enough to read anything more than a few pages of the great Book of Nature, which is easy and pleasant reading. He uses his brains little and his muscles much; he is out-doors most of the time and exercising steadily, hence he can stand hard tramping, paddling, or portaging, far better as a rule than a man fresh from the city. He *should* do this; he is used to it, and moreover, his foot is on his native heath. Bring him to Gotham, put him in charge of a gay young bravo, one of New York's many "rounders," or all-nighters, trail him through "them city cañons" until about three o'clock in the morning, and it's odds on that he'll be "that 'tarnal tired that he can't wag a foot."

Now and then the old hunter catches a tartar. There are city-bred fellows, ex-giants of college sports and athletic fields, who carry their nervous energy well into middle life. Such men appear never to get entirely out of condition, and when they go afield with the old hunter they harden in a marvelously short time, and can hold Leatherstocking close at tramping, packing, paddling or shooting.

It may seem a strange thing to say, but it is more than likely that the best shots with gun and rifle in this country are to be found in the cities and larger centers. Because a man is a professional hunter, it does not necessarily follow that he is an extraordinary shot. In fact, many hunters I have met proved only moderately skillful with fire-arms. Their secret of success lay in the fact that from constant practice they were well versed in woodcraft and the haunts and habits of game, while their perfect knowledge of the country enabled them to secure what a better shot might have lost.

Among the hunters of the old school and such men as follow the craft to-day, have been, and are still to be found, individuals of note. One may be a giant at the paddle and portage another is a phenomenal trailer and reader of "sign," another a master of Nature's book, of the rifle, gun or revolver, or a



“THE INJUN HELD HIS BLANKET FOR A SAIL.” (p. 447.)

great runner, or walker, cook or axeman. Some individuals combined several of these desirable qualities and were more famous than their brethren. When the pen-sharp wants a hero for a wild yarn, he pictures a man unrivaled in all these things, and having any other romantic accomplishment which may occur to the writer. This hero also battles with dangerous brutes every few days as a matter of course, and is seamed and scarred from old mills against every kind of claw, tooth and horn worn in the wilds. In reality few hunters have passed through more than one or two experiences that are really thrilling, in spite of their many stories. Some of the men of the woods can lie with astounding fluency and fervor, and they spin yarns of their adventures as though they merely indicated a few at random from an inexhaustible stock. The real dramas are played but seldom. If a man has a set-to with bear, cat, moose, or other creature, he generally learns enough in a few rounds to prevent him forever from having another. Most of the desperate encounters recorded have occurred either in the minds of the heroes, or as results of accidental conditions, when the hero didn't want to be a hero, and would never have been one could he have skinned for cover in time.

I have met several old Leatherstockings who were unquestionably fine men, and who at first acquaintance appeared to approach the popular idol. But the close companionship of a camp—and nothing will reveal a man's nature quicker—soon opened my eyes. The final verdict was: If he only had so and so, or was such and such, he'd be akin to perfection—the ideal hunter.

In regard to the sadly unromantic adventures of hunters and their superstitions, I may cite Old Joe. At first glance he was the typical Leatherstocking: six feet two inches in his moccasins, square-shouldered, with grand chest and long, sinewy limbs, every ounce of his two hundred pounds was useful bone and beef. He was a magnificent looking man, and his grizzled beard and hair seemed strangely out of place when one watched his easy, rapid movements. As Kipling puts it: "He tread the ling like a buck in spring, and he looked like a lance in rest," and a

lance that had seen active service and taken and returned many a sturdy blow. Joe had a reputation for wonderful fleetness of foot, and had certainly great endurance. His face was not exactly handsome, but far from ill-looking; certain strong lines, with regular features, aided by a pair of fine keen blue eyes, gave him an independent, almost defiant expression which was very apt to impress all comers. In the prairie bar-rooms and settlements he was looked upon as a peaceable, good-natured man, who might get ugly in his cups, and who was good to let severely alone. Among his circle of admirers he was acknowledged to be the best long distance runner, wrestler, boxer, fighter and trailer in the district, and no one ever dreamed of rivaling him with the rifle, gun, or paddle.

I had heard much of Joe, and had been advised to look him up and hunt with him. Chance threw us together, and I shall not soon forget the meeting. I left the train one evening at a little lonely station about which spread a vague expanse of prairie—a level waste and rounding gray of apparent desolation. A couple of miles away a gleam of water betrayed the location of Spirit Lake, a darker line about it marked the scanty growth of timber along its shores, and here and there in the distance a brush-covered butte loomed darkly above what might from all appearances have been open sea with an island at intervals.

The landlord of the hotel had been advised by wire of my coming, and he presently turned up and hailed me. A few moments later I was in my small room and had stowed my guncase and grip where they would be least in the way.

I threw off my coat and walking-boots, and after a freshening up, put on my slippers and went down to the bar, wearing as outer garb only flannel shirt, knee-breeches, woolen stockings and the unfortunate slippers. Joe, and half a dozen of his admirers, were in the bar-room, lounging about and wasting time as only prairie men can waste it.

I recognized him at once from the description given me, and it didn't take many minutes for me to discover that the company didn't exactly fancy my costume, and especially the slippers. They had probably heard from the

landlord of my coming, and, Joe among the others, had in all likelihood expected somebody else, for a "fresh" one presently queried, "What is it, 'an whar *did* it come from?"

From behind his bar the landlord telegraphed ferocious signals for the man to shut up, for the railway was all-powerful and its representative must not be tampered with.

The half-concealed scorn of the party bothered me not at all, for I had met dozens like them during the year. All of them had been drinking a bit, though none was anything near intoxicated. I knew how to take them, so, after staring square into the face of each one, I remarked abruptly—"Well, don't you know enough to stick a tenderfoot for the drinks? Toddle up to the trough and name your poison."

They knew what that meant, and they lost no time in coming. Picking up a glass I grunted the usual "Ho." Every man eyed me curiously for an instant, then each ejaculated "Ho," and the drinks slid to where they would do most good. The landlord proffered the change, but I told him to "round 'em up again," whereupon the respect of the party became mine at once.

"I don't keer for them durn things on his feet, but I knowed he were no goslin' ez soon ez he chinned 'Ho.' He larnt that on the plains!" remarked the "fresh" member, and my introduction was complete.

Now this particular hostelry was a kind of sporting center. Winchesters stood in a corner behind the bar, in another were a couple of ten-gauge breech-loaders, and piled on a little table were four as dirty and badly-stained "pillows" as I had ever set eyes on. I had noticed outside a rusty twelve-pound shot, a big boulder, and quoits and horse-shoes, while a dusty, much-worn piece of level ground suggested that weight-throwing, jumping, bouts with the soiled "pillows" and wrestling were standard amusements. I knew well what would surely come up sooner or later, for the new comer *always* gets measured before he leaves such a place.

After a chat with all hands and an arrangement with Old Joe for some shooting next day, I ordered another round of drinks and we all went outside to smoke and yarn. A sort of twilight lingers long upon the plains, and ob-

jects within a reasonable distance could be seen plainly enough. The fun was not long in coming. I was standing by the door, when Old Joe stepped up and carelessly flinging his arm over my shoulder, gave me a sort of friendly hug. There is some magnetic influence that tells you at once, even in a hand-shake, whether or not you have hold of a powerful mortal, and no sooner had that arm closed tightly around me than I knew that the owner of it was stiff as a tree. Joe wasn't rough, he was merely seeking information, and he started slightly after his arm had nipped me gently again.

"Why, blame my cats, ye feel bigger'n ye looks—how much chest ye got?"

"Oh, 'bout forty-two."

"Same's me. What 'yer weigh?"

"Couple hundred."

"What 'yer stand?"

"Six, bare."

"Wa-al I beat ye, couple inches, but ye oughter be pretty husky, 'tho ye aint more'n a great big boy—say, what yer wear them things on yer feet fur, anyhow?"

A loud guffaw from all hands followed this. It had been expected, and was the popular style of rough humor of the plains. The next laugh was just as friendly when I informed Joe that I wore the slippers to "make big chumps ask questions," for this also chorded finely with prairie humor.

Then followed the usual tomfoolery—showing of arms (big, hairy arms they were, too), feeling of biceps, and statements humbly made by the owners of the arms, that the said arms were small and no good, which was the proper thing to say, and really meant that the owner considered his arm something fine and he himself a devil of a fellow at his own particular game. My own poor, lean, white, hairless and soft defenders were loudly praised and commented on. This was also politeness, and really meant that the critics considered the arms no good and could hardly keep their faces straight while saying different. One small man, keen and hard as a gun-lock spring, felt my arm carefully and remarked:

"It might be good—depends upon what you've used it at; some arms never get knotty and hard."

Somebody, to focus matters I suppose, picked up the round shot and

made a put, saying as he did so, "This measures arms better'n looking at 'em. We'll have one try all round for the drinks." A foot-mark was made, and the man put again for all he was worth. How far he covered I don't know. We did no measuring, but merely marked the shortest put, as the maker of it was the victim. None of the puts was anything very much. Several others tried, each passing the first mark a few inches; then the redoubtable Joe seized the shot. He looked as if he might put it into the next township, but, sad to say, he placed it a half inch behind the worst

came, and the moment he posed, I turned to pick up my cap, for no second glance was required. He beat me a foot at least, and could have added another foot to the margin had occasions demanded. He told me that shot-putting had been his favorite game in the East years before, and that I ought to beat him if I was educated. He frankly added that I didn't know how to handle myself, and had only fooled with the game, which was true enough. But the drinks were on Joe.

When I started for my room some time later, the landlord whispered—



IN HOT PURSUIT WAS A BIG FALCON. (p. 447.)

mark. He claimed that his hand had slipped, but added significantly, "It's fur enough anyhow." The small, springy man handed me the shot, and as I toed the scratch Joe's mark didn't seem as far away as it should have been considering that these men were wild and woolly giants. The small man watched me closely, and his eyes danced as I got into position. Of course, I put that shot as if thousands depended on the mark it made, and when it dented the ground good six inches beyond the best mark, the small man laughed and shouted, "I thought so." Then his turn

"You'll have to wrestle in the morning. Joe'll never feel right 'till he gets even," to which I laughingly replied, "All right, he'll have an easy mark."

Sure enough, when I went outside nest morning, there was Old Joe, ruddy-faced and hairy-chested, fresh from an interview with the watering-trough. "Marn-in," he cried, "I jist 'bin waitin' fur somebody to show up, so's I could take a fall outer him. I km just shake them things off yer feet fur ye, fur fun."

There was nothing to do but step out and take the medicine, though I knew well how it would be. I was quick

enough and strong enough, but wrestling was Joe's game, while I had done very little at it. So I went like a lamb to the slaughter, for to quit would have meant everlasting loss of prestige.

In some mysterious fashion everybody appeared before we got started, and we went at it catch-as-catch-can. It was rough play. For a time we pranced about trying to get a hold; once I almost had him, but he broke away by sheer strength; then we got to close quarters, and I knew that my name began with D—. I stayed as long as I could, then I was suddenly shot over Joe's head and landed flat on my back on the soft ground, where for a few seconds I contemplated some comets unknown to scientists.

The crowd seemed to think that I had performed well enough, especially as I promptly paid the usual price of a downfall. Joe was jubilant, and he betrayed a weakness of his character by "gassing" a trifle over his victory. He had never been bested but once—that time he had tackled an expert and lost a long, hard bout.

His present triumph did not, however, console him entirely for his defeat at the shot-putting. I saw him eyeing the gloves, which I had hoped would not enter into the discussion. Haphazard bouts are frequently nothing more or less than fights, and it is easy to rouse a man's temper with a jab or two. The stains on the gloves told that they had been roughly used, and they were hard in places from dried gravy of old-time bastings. Still, they were pillows big enough to prevent any serious damage. Joe had them in his mind, and presently he picked them up and said, "We've a horse apiece, let's have a round with the gloves—*light fur pints.*"

The crowd hustled outside at once, and we put on the gloves and followed. I was not altogether dissatisfied, for I had to make a reputation at something, and I knew more about boxing than about any sport, except shooting.

My keen friend of the shot crept near and queried, "Know anything about them?"

"Oh, yes, just a little."

"Good! that big stuff can't box a little bit."

To be candid, Joe couldn't, though he fancied that he was no duffer. He acted like a man with only one hand, and that

his right. The boxing "fur pints" meant a knockout as soon as possible, and this, of course, I was prepared for. We faced for a moment, then Joe let go his right with a drive which, had it landed, would have knocked all the fun out of the set-to instanter. But the big arm only sawed atmosphere, for I got out of reach with lots to spare.

"Stand up squar, toe ter toe!" shouted somebody, and I heard the springy man tell the speaker that he didn't know what he was talking about.

Joe figured that I would jump away again, so he drove in his right promptly. A right counter is a nasty thing at best, but rough physic is good for burly patients, and I don't think Joe knows yet how his jaw ran against my glove. It jarred him and set his eyes blazing, and his next drive was as hot as he could make it. I only had to shift a few inches to avoid it, and at once sent in a hot left-handed return which jarred Joe's head back smartly.

The keen man spake in gleeful tones. "That settles it! Old Joe's in for it now. I'll bet cigars all round he don't touch him."

Joe heard it—he was getting hot anyway, and the talk made him mad. "Consarn ye! ef I get hold of ye onct I'll—" He made a wild rush and banged away furiously; I ducked and swung the right mitten as hard as I could against his ear. He staggered, shuffled off sideways, then dropped and bridged himself on his hands and feet. His face bore a curious expression of surprised doubt, rage, and a comical tinge of downright blue funk. He didn't seem to grasp the situation at first, but he suddenly leaped upright, ready to go on. I had pulled off the glove, but he snarled out, "Come on, I ain't half done yet."

"Not with sand on your gloves—not by a jugful," I replied.

The moment's pause gave him time to consider, and he slowly fumbled his hands free, saying, "All right, pardner—guess I don't know nuthin' 'bout this funny, dance-around business. I wrestles mostly from now out."

The whole crowd laughed, and the keen man collected his cigars with a holy, chastened joy. Not a spark of resentment smoldered, and for as long as I was with those men, I was welcome to wear what I chose on my feet, providing I took chaff good-naturedly.

Old Joe lost no prestige, save with the keen man, who had sized him up correctly long before. He was only good at some things, but his satellites never appeared to grasp that fact. He never wanted to box any more, nor did he gloat over his wrestling.

That afternoon a curious thing happened, which showed up Joe's superstitions. It also gave me a peculiar sort of a scare which made quite a lasting impression.

Joe and I had tramped across the prairie to Spirit Lake, hoping to bag a few grouse by the way, and to wind up with the ducks.

When we had entered the cover and were working through it to the lake, my foot caught in something which I at first fancied was a dead branch. Looking closely at it I saw that it was an old bleached elk antler, dropped years before by one of the giants which formerly haunted the neighborhood of Spirit. The antler was partially buried, so I pulled it up and was amazed at its great size. I had seen many, but never one approaching this, which must have been worn by one of the grandest old bulls that ever bugled. The antler itself was valueless, but the tremendous beam and tines impressed me so much that I called to Joe to come and have a look at it. I held it poised on one end, and when he got close enough, pushed the upper end over so that he could catch it. He let it fall and looked at it closely as it lay.

"Did you ever see such a thing in your life, Joe?"

"Naw, I didn't. It's a whaler, and no mistake. I wouldn't have fingered it."

"Why, what's wrong with it? It can't hurt anything."

"Wa-al, I dunno. It's near twicest as big as any I ever seed; an', like enough, it b'longed ter ole Bond's big bull."

"Who the deuce is old Bond, and what about his big bull? That belonged to a big bull, sure—but what's that got to do with it?"

"A lot, pardner, a hull lot. Do ye know how this lake got its name?"

"No, and I don't care. But that big antler had nothing to do with it."

"Mebbe it did, an' mebbe it didn't. If it *did*, I kinder wish you hadn't tetched it, nur found it, fur it may mean trouble."

"Rubbish! That style of a horn

never hurt a man. I'm game for the trouble. Come on," I said, and we went on to the lake.

Old Joe seemed a bit preoccupied for a time, but finally he said:

"Ye don't know what might be tied to thet horn. This lake used to be a sight bigger'n it is now, and it got its name from a mighty queer thing. Spirit Lake's its name, an' fur why? Kase ole Bond an' his Injun got spirit-ed away Ole Bond was a great trapper an' hunter 'bout here fifty years ago. There was lots of elk in them days, an' Bond killed his share of what was round of all critters. He kep' the Injun with him all the time, an' the pair of 'em knowed more 'bout huntin' than a army of us fellers. The country was pretty wet them days, an' there was more timber 'fore the fires 'most wiped it out. All round the lake was little muskegs an' slews, an' there was quicksands in parts that's all grass now—just the same as there's quicksands 'bout the little lake now. You see that big butte that looks like a meat-pie 'way down there? Well, the water used to be right to the foot of it in Bond's time. It was a great stampin' ground fur elk, an' one day Bond an' the Injun found sign of a smashin' ole bull right by the butte. They hunted him around fur near a hull day, an' at last Bond got mad an' swore he'd have that bull if he had to hunt him all night. Wa-al, they skirmished round 'til the moon come up, an' by 'n-by they heered the durndest kind of buglin' right off the top of the butte. Bond he sneaked up the side an' crawled 'most atop of the all-firedest, biggest bull elk he'd ever seed. It was a-buglin' an' a-snortin' round scandalous, an' Bond he plugged lead into it right away, an' drapped it dead in its tracks. It was so big an' had such awful horns that the idee of killing it kinder rattled 'em, an' Bond an' the Injun sorter war-danced round it fur quite a spell. Then Bond he 'lowed it was such a boss bull that they'd have to take it home hull an' show off with it. The bull was so big that they couldn't carry it nowadays, so Bond he schemed that they'd make a raft an' float the elk to his side the lake. It was bright moonlight, so, 'stead of sleepin' like white men an' raftin' by daylight, they set to work then and thar. Bond had a small

axe, an' they cut drift-stuff an' chopped trees till they had enough. Then they made the raft in the water under the butte. 'Fore gray dawn they had it all done. Then they started to get the bull to it. All they had to do was to start him, an' he slid down the butte flyin'. Then they slopped round an' tugged an' hauled till they got him on to the raft. The breeze was fair, an' the Injun held his blanket fur a sail, an' 'fore sun-up they was driftin' across the lake, ole Bond squattin' in his buckskins an' steerin' with a paddle he'd found. There was mists on the water, an' they couldn't see very good, but they come a-driftin' an' takin' chances. When they got 'most to the t'other side the raft kinder broke up—moonlight ain't no time for raft-buildin', anyhow—an' the bull an' rifles an' ole Bond an' the Injun all slumped into the lake in less'n four feet of water an' more'n ten feet of mud. A man livin' near the lake found the Injun two days after on the shore, but up to his chops in quicksand. He was 'most dead, but he rounded to after a week's nursin'. Ye can't kill an Injun—an' he told the man 'bout ole Bond an' the big bull an' the raftin'. The man never seed ole Bond, nur the bull, nur the rifles any more, an' the Injun he lit out of the country soon as he got husky enough to travel. Ever since that time the lake's apt to look red in the moonlight, an' ole Bond an' the Injun an' the big bull drifts across on the raft. Anybody sees it is liable to get into a mess mighty durn quick. Lots of men have seed it at different times, an' every one of 'em struck trouble right away. None of 'em lived more'n a day or two. That's why it's called Spirit Lake; an' I don't want to see ole Bond, the Injun, nur the bull, nur the raft; an' I wish ye hadn't found the horn, fur, from its size, I guess it fitted the big bull."

"But, Joe," I protested, "the Indian didn't get killed, so how could he be on the ghost-raft?"

"Dunno and don't care. He jined ole Bond soon enough, 'an the pair of 'em goes raftin' when some fellow's going to get into trouble; that's all I know 'bout it."

It seemed highly ridiculous for this strapping fellow to be ranting away on such an argument, but I made no further comment.

Plenty of duck were winging about and floating far out in the lake, and Joe advised that we should separate, skirt the water in opposite directions, and meet below the pie-shaped butte, some four miles away. Before departing he warned me to keep on secure footing and to take no chances with places which might be quicksand.

After a time Joe's big gun boomed information that he was getting sport, and a couple of small flocks swung in front of me over the shore. I got a few birds in this way, then wearied of it, and halted for a time on a little point. The dull "bump-rr-rump" of Joe's ten-gauge came rolling across the sleepy water, and presently I heard a curious squealing cry, and a bunch of plover whistled past as fast as frightened wings could carry them. In hot pursuit was a big falcon, and I watched the chase eagerly. The falcon was evidently only amusing itself, for it secured no game.

After going nearly to the end of the lake and seeing nothing of Joe below the butte, I concluded to loaf a bit, and lounged flat on a sunny hummock of sand. And here came in the marvelous part of it all. As I stared lazily over the water, watching the strings of restless fowl and listening vainly for the sound of Joe's gun, a strange fog-like haze came drifting silently from the north. I stared and stared, for never had I seen the like on such a day and at that time of year. On and on, like the trailing vaporous robes of some specter, glided the mist, till it had wrapped the whole landscape and hid all from view. Presently I noticed that it seemed to be growing crimson near the center of the lake, and in a few seconds the whole mist glowed with a dull red.

"Fire!"—the thought flashed into my mind, followed instantly by the knowledge that I wouldn't plunge into that awful muck-trap of a lake even to escape a burning. Joe must have started it! Then I reasoned on the folly of such an idea. It could be no fire, for I should have seen the smoke long before, and, moreover, the strange crimson mist about me bore no taint of burning. Still, there it was, and it almost frightened me.

Suddenly the red curtain in the direction of the butte became agitated as though stirred by a breeze, and the whole mist 'began to roll steadily



forward. I don't know what I expected to see, but I kept my eyes riveted upon a spot where a faint glimpse of the water already showed. Thinner and thinner grew the strange crimson gauze, till a sunbeam pierced it and blazed full upon a reach of water fifty yards square. There! in the center! floating—oh, Lord! it was the raft! and old Bond! the Indian, and a big bull elk. Then the mist closed heavier than before, while I stared in mute horror towards where the raft had been revealed.

A moment later the mist stirred again within twenty yards of my feet, and a circular spot of water about the size of a wagon wheel showed with startling distinctness. Its surface swirled and worked as though something was struggling beneath, and slowly a rounded grimy object protruded till it was two feet above the water. The mud and slime slid from it and lo! there was the round bronzed face of long-lost old Bond. I looked at him in speechless amazement; he was shockingly dirty, and foul water-weeds were in his beard, yet his appearance was more mirth-provoking than terrifying. He spat some dirty water from his mouth and remarked:

"Say, young feller, ye think this yarn of old Joe's is a fake. Wa-al 'tain't. Ef ye'd bin trailin' roun' under here like I hev fer a few duzzen generations ye'd know better. I tell ye it's mighty greasy an' sloppy under here, and don't ye forgit it. But thur yarn's true as gospel. I drapped the bull, an' me and the Injun rafted most across, an' thet thar elk was the allfiredest, biggest—"

I woke up with a sudden start that brought every sense to full alertness. The sun was sinking behind a knoll; the air was perfectly still; nothing living was in sight save dark columns of duck streaming from all directions to their resting-place on the lake.

"Ho-o-o-o-o-oo!" A long, half-human howl seemed to come from below the butte. It was vibrant with mortal fear, and I sprang to my feet. Again it came, a wild, scared-to-death yell for help. I remembered that Joe must have reached our appointed place of meeting at least an hour before, so I broke into a swift run and dashed along the narrow ridge of safe footing. In two minutes I was directly below the

butte, but could see naught of Joseph. I knew that something serious was the matter and sung out with all the power of a far-reaching voice:

"Hello, Jo-o-o-o! ! !"

An answer came faintly from somewhere close beside me: "Fur God's sake, pardner, hurry! What in thunder ye bin doin'? I've bin yelpin' like a trapped kiyute fur ye fur over an hour!" A quick glance discovered him, and I saw the mighty hunter buried almost to his armpits in a very neat sample of a bog-hole. It took but a few minutes to bridge the treacherous surface with drift-stuff and brush. I secured an old travois pole which some squaw had discarded, and after a full-back yo-heave-ho, old Joe was snaked into this glad, free life once more. He explained that he had chased a crippled duck to head it off from the water, and in his eager pursuit had forgotten the treacherous surroundings. When he plumped into the bog-hole he had sense enough to hang on to his gun, and by spreading his arms and the gun over what trifling growth there was, had managed to keep his shoulders above the deadly trap. While I had been sleeping and interviewing old Bond, Joe had been suffering agonies of fright and had shouted vainly many times for me. A nasty idea had crept into his mind that possibly I had managed to get into a similar fix, and if so, he knew we were both doomed.

After he had taken a pull at my flask and stretched himself, we walked to a small slough into which Joe waded and rinsed himself off. A stiff six-mile tramp across prairie to the hotel warmed us both up and prevented Joe's experiencing any troublesome effects from his involuntary miring. During the walk home I told him of my vision.

"Thar ye are!" said he. "Ye wouldn't believe it when I told ye 'bout thur horn. Now ye've seed it yerself. I knowed thur horn b'longed to ole Bond's big bull, an' I was dead sure we'd run agin some kind of hard luck. Might good job one of us wa'n't wiped out. I never knowed thur sign to fail afore."

But you may ask, "Is all this rigma-*role* true?" In old Joe's words it is—"True? Wa-al, sufferin' cats!—*of course* it's true—S-A-R-T-I-N!"