

THE FAMILY STORY

TWO GAMES OF FREEZE-OUT

The range-rider of the Judith Gap was playing freeze-out in the stage ranch saloon. There were four players, the stakes were the drinks, and it cost \$1 a round for whisky every few minutes, for "red ilker" was two bits a drink in the days before the railroads in Montana. That made no difference to the range-rider, however. He might lose his monthly stipend of \$50 in one night, but he could run "some of a bill," for he had an all winter's job ahead of him, and the profit on the goods was so many hundred per cent. that the host could afford to take the chances. And then, you know, if he got real hard up he could get a few horses to break, and \$5 was easily earned by riding something that no one else would. It was a little risky, to be sure; but then how else could cow-punchers die if not rolled on or trampled to death by some terrified horse. So the game went on.

The wind howled around the log building, and the fine snow sifted through some of the cracks where mud daubing had fallen out. The box stove roared and got red in the cheeks in an unsuccessful attempt to keep a pall of water that stood in a far corner from freezing. Notwithstanding its efforts, the crackle of the ice was heard as the cold outside increased, and penetrating the cracks fought back the efforts of the stove.

It was about 10 o'clock in the morning, but the sun was only up an hour or so, and the ice-laden storm from the north was making a very successful attempt to conceal the fact. A "blue fog" was rolling through the gap, and the mercury had all dropped into the bulb, tired of trying to keep track of the eccentricities of a climate borrowed from the occasion from the snowy wastes of British America.

The game went on at the table in a quiet kind of way. Every time the range-rider moved his foot the spur chains jingled on the floor. The stage-stock tender on the other side of the table was playing his best, for he knew he had reached the limit of his credit at the bar, but the cards were against him. Two sheep-herders completed the quartette, and the sneaky-looking, bear-eyed stock-tender sized them up with a glance that boded ill if they perchance fell asleep before the bill behind the bar had received their rolls, earned by standing out on the hills in the storms of the six or seven months past. Two wet colley dogs lay by the stove with smoking pelts, dreaming of the trail, for every once in a while one of them would give a curious "yip-yip" that suggested efforts to get a slow band of sheep into the corral. The bartender stood with his elbows on the counter, peering out of the window and waiting for the inevitable moment, that occurred at more or less regular intervals, when some one of the players would "go broke," requiring a round of drinks, a dollar added to the steadily increasing store in the till, and a redvision of the chips.

After doing the honors on one of these occasions, he opened the door, admitting a cold blast of air and snow that made the card players swear. And, peering out, he said:

"Time for the stage. I guess the kid must ha' missed the trail."

"Well, what if he has?" growled the stock tender, to whom the arrival of the stage meant an hour of cold and disagreeable work. "It's no use freezing us to death lookin' for him; he's no chicken."

The sheep-herders laughed, the range-rider yawned, when a rattling of wheels and harness and a cheerful "hullo" outside caused the game to be forgotten, and all made a rush to the door. They were greeted by two or three mail sacks thrown with considerable force; and as the stocktender led away the horses the driver, a great bundle of blankets, shawls and buffalo robe, rolled off his seat and followed the mail sacks, as they were dragged through the saloon by the barkeeper, into the store beyond.

After the driver had loosened up his outer wraps and melted the frost from his eyelashes, he looked around and nodded to those present. When his eye lit on the range-rider, he said:

"Hullo, Bill; I saw Campbell at the river, and he sent a note to you. Here it is," and he handed a piece of paper to the rider. Bill looked at it a moment, and then whispered softly to himself, glancing out of the window at the scurrying snow meanwhile.

"He wants you to go down the south side of the Gap and see if them Basin cattle that has drifted through are badly mixed up with the Musselshell outfit, so he told me," said the driver. "He said for you to go down this morning, stop over night at the O. H. home ranch on Careless Creek, and send word by me when I come back to-morrow; and

if the cattle ain't scattered yit he'll send over a wagon outfit and try and work 'em back into the Basin."

"Yes," said Bill slowly, "that is what he says here; but, great God! does he expect me to go when this fog is a-blowing?"

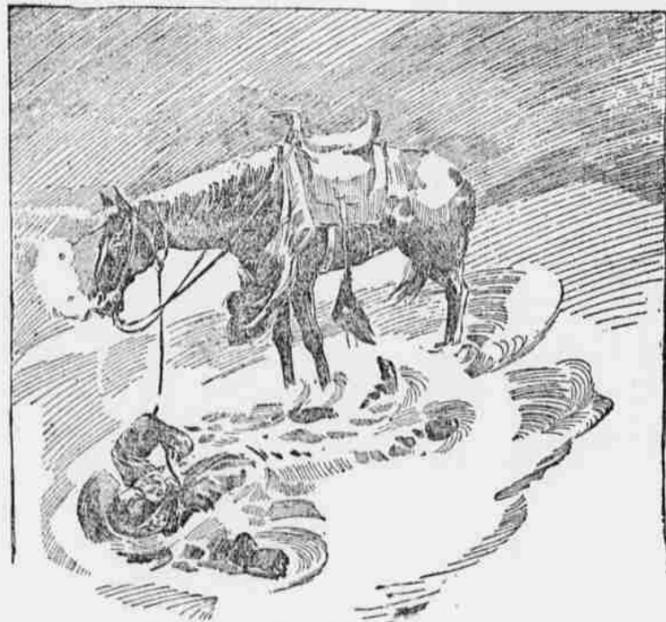
"I suppose so," said the driver. "He said if you didn't go now it would be no use later, for the cattle would be scattered sure, and the Basin round-up would lose a heap."

The cow-puncher made no reply, but stepping up to the bar he said: "Give me a drink, Jack; it'll take considerable of your stuff to keep a man from freezin' to death to-day." Taking a liberal dose of the liquor referred to he pulled up the belt of his leather "chaps," adjusted his six-shooter, and taking a blanket-lined canvas overcoat from a nail on the wall, pulled it on. He then tied a silk handkerchief over his ears and pulled his sombrero well down over his eyes. "So-long," he said as he went out the door. "I'll be back to-morrow night and play you another stack of freeze-out," and the clank of his spurs was deadened in the snow as he went out to the stable.

"This is tough business, Mike," he said as he tightened up the saddle cinches on his sorrel horse, that was standing in the barn. "Some day you an' I'll retire from cow-punchin' an' be honest grangers, an' then no bloody boss can order us out when we don't want to go; an' instead of some old greasy buck to cook our meals, we'll have a nice little woman"—here the adept hand stopped in its adjustment of the straps, and a reverie followed that caused the expectant horse to

of him what to the unblinking eye resembled houses, with outlines dimmed by the driving storm, but the rider knew they were cattle. He changed his course and rode up closer to read the brands. They were covered with frost, but he was satisfied that these were the cattle he was after; and what was more, that there were several hundred of them in this one bunch. The best service he could render his employers was to bunch this outfit, turn them toward the Gap, and take them back the next day before they scattered.

The puncher's mind was strangely dimmed. His thoughts would revert to days when, on the old Missouri farm in the States, he lay at noon in the shade of the haystack and ate the bountiful lunch provided by mother and sisters. He could hear the water pouring over the old mill-dam down below the orchard—and then he was in the orchard. But this would never do. He was now on the Montana prairie, one of the best cow hands in the Basin, and here was a bunch of cattle to be taken care of; he and Mike were all that stood between their employers and the loss of several thousand dollars. The puncher rolled the big rowels of his spurs into Mike's sides, the game cow-pony sprang forward, and they went around and around the cattle until they had them bunched. It was hard work to get them strung out against the storm; they would do nothing but mill, for the frosty air cut like needles in their faces when they turned in the direction the solitary puncher was trying to make them go. But he found himself strangely lacking that life and energy which had won him his wide reputation on the ranges. Sleep hung heavy on his eyes. He rolled in the saddle, and when Mike made one of his famous quick turns his rider clung to the horns of the saddle to keep from falling off. Suddenly it seemed to the puncher that it was getting dark; the herd was but a dim outline; the wind tore at the bunches of sage and grease wood, piling up the snow on one side and cutting out caves on the other. The rider was warm and cold at intervals. His mind wandered to the last fall drive, when on the night herd he was wont to slip from his horse and seek the friendly cover of a



BILL ANDERSON SLEPT THROUGH HIS LAST GAME OF FREEZE-OUT.

glance around to see what new devilment his master was up to—for had he not often put stones under the saddle blanket and otherwise outraged the equine feelings to make him buck when he was to be loaned to some ambitious tenderfoot? But the horse simply saw his master leaning his head on a hand that rested on the saddlehorn, and he moved impatiently.

"No," said the rider slowly, "that will not be, Mike; fur they ain't fur such as we;" and giving an extra pull on the front cinch that caused Mike to kick and snort, the rider put the bridle on the horse and led him out of the low log stable. The storm still raged furiously, and it was bitter cold. With a glance at the sky and a muttered oath he placed his hand on the horn, climbed into the saddle with an easy, practiced swing, and started toward the south, following in the snow the fast disappearing trail of the stage that had preceded him but a few minutes.

He rode in this direction for some time. The storm, which was at their backs, did not seem much to these two, hardened to the parching wind of summer and the freezing blast of winter in that open country. The puncher rolled a cigarette or two. He noticed the cold was sharp on his fingers when he ungloved, and it was with considerable difficulty that he kept his eyes free from frost; but that would make a story to tell on the hot and dusty drive next summer. He passed a few stray cattle, and with practiced eye read the brands as coming from the round-up he represented. Leaving the stage road to the right, outlined by the two high ridges of hard packed snow crunched by the wheels of the daily stages, he bore down toward the Careless Creek drainage. The hills looked all the same in the driving storm, but the wind was steady and gave him a clew to direction. Suddenly there loomed up in front

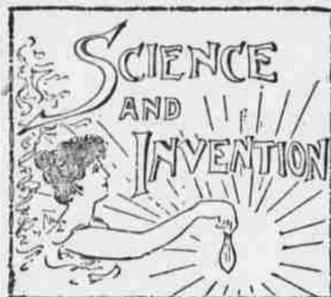
buffalo wallow, or a badger hill, topped by bunch of sage, to slip the long bridle line over his arm and curl up on the ground within the friendly shelter and sleep. Why not now? The shelter was better for the drifted snow, and he was so sleepy. A few moments' rest and he would be able to resume his solitary watch and hold the herd until day. He slid from his horse and followed out the suggestion. It was cozy and comfortable. Mike swung his hindquarters toward the north, clamped his tail between his legs, humped his back and philosophically nodded off to sleep. The puncher slept also.

The sun rose next morning on a scene of crystal splendor dazzling to the eye, and when the two men who lived at O. H. home ranch rode out that morning they were nearly blinded by the glare.

"We'll look up the north fence first," said the foreman to the other. "The cattle may have broken it down yesterday in the storm."

As they rode along the fence, but a few rods from the cabins and corrals they saw on the other side an animal motionless on the prairie. When they approached they saw that it was a saddled horse, covered with snow and ice. Putting spurs to their mounts they rode rapidly in that direction. The shivering brute on the other side of the fence heard them coming, pricked up his ears, whinnied and pawed the ground, but did not move away; his bridle rein was around an arm that could not relax its grip. For Bill Anderson, with a smile of peace upon his face, had slept through his last game of freeze-out, and the bar to which he was now called, to make final settlement, was the Bar of Judgment.

Type are slightly less than 1 inch in length.



Aerial Travel.

Prof. S. P. Langley is reported as saying in a recent interview that, having proved both theoretically and practically that machines can be made to travel through the air, if he had the time and money to spend, he believed he could make one "on a scale such as would demonstrate to the world that a large passenger-carrying flying machine can be a commercial as well as a scientific success."

Danger from Wall Paper.

It was formerly supposed that the reason why wall papers containing arsenic were dangerous to health was because arsenic hydrogen was formed through the action of mold upon the paper, and then given off in the air of the room. Recent experiments in Germany, however, seem to show that the danger really arises from particles of dust proceeding from the paper. It is said that at present few wall-papers containing arsenic are manufactured.

Guarding a Coast by Electricity.

A correspondent of Nature suggests that a long coast-line may be rendered safe to ships in foggy weather by means of an electric cable lying ten miles offshore, and parallel with the coast, in about fifty fathoms of water. When ever an iron ship approached within 200 yards of the cable, he says, an electric detector on board the vessel would give the alarm. In support of the suggestion he asserts that messages sent along an electric cable lying on the sea-bottom have been read, with suitable apparatus, on a ship floating above the cable.

More Monsters of Olden Times.

The fossil remains of an apparently new species of the ancient reptile named by geologists the "mosasaur" have just been discovered in the chalks of Northern France. These reptiles, which became extinct ages ago, were of enormous size, some being seventy or more feet in length. They had comparatively slender bodies, like a snake, paddles like a whale, and some of the characteristic features of a lizard. They were especially abundant in America, and their remains have been found in New Jersey and in the States bordering the Gulf of Mexico, as well as west of the Mississippi River.

A Vanished River's Track.

Explorations made last autumn brought to light many interesting facts about what is known to geologists as the "Nipissing-Mattawa River." This is believed to have been the ancient outlet for the Great Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior before their waters began to flow through Lake Erie. The old river bed was traced, in the Canadian province of Ontario, from Lake Nipissing, near the northern part of Georgian Bay, to the valley of the Ottawa River. At one place the site of an ancient cataract was discovered, and reason was found for believing that the size of the vanished river was very similar to that of the St. Clair and Detroit Rivers, through which the Great Lakes now have their outlet.

Liquid Crystal.

Among the minor wonders of modern chemical discovery are Doctor Lehman's "liquid crystals." Recently Professor Miers, of the Royal Society, has been experimenting with some of these curious substances, and he finds that when "azoxyphenol" crystals are warmed on a microscope slide they undergo a sudden transformation from the solid to the liquid condition on reaching a temperature of 134 degrees. Yet, having become liquid, the substance nevertheless retains the form of crystals, and these remarkable crystals possess the property of double refraction. If heated up to 165 degrees, the substance undergoes another change, and loses its double refractivity.

Is It an Ancient Alphabet?

Monsieur Piette has made some remarkable discoveries in a cave at Le Mas-d'Azil, in Southern France, near the Pyrenees. This cave, shaped like a tunnel, was evidently inhabited in very ancient days by the race of people called the "cave-dwellers" who lived in the Neolithic, or Later Stone, age. They left a great number of oblong and flattened pebbles on which they had painted curious figures and devices with peroxide of iron. Some of the pebbles contain only dots, or stripes, which, the discoverer thinks, may have been symbols for numbers. Others bear devices having some resemblance to alphabetic characters.

One pebble has painted upon it the singular row of figures here represented, and Monsieur Piette does not hesitate to suggest that some of these designs are possibly phonetic symbols, which had a definite mean-



ing to the inhabitants of the cave. A writer in Nature, reviewing Monsieur Piette's "astonishing discoveries," makes an additional suggestion. "Assuming these markings to be syllabic signs," he says, "can it be possible that these pebbles were employed in building up words and sentences, much as children use boxes of letters?"

Mirage in Alaska.

The most wonderful mirages ever beheld by mortal eyes are those that are seen in the twilight winter days in northern Alaska. Those remarkably ghastly pictures of things, both imaginary and real, are mirrored on the surface of the waste plains instead of upon the clouds or in the atmosphere, says a correspondent of the St. Louis Republic. Mimic lakes and water courses fringed with vegetation are to be seen pictured as real as life on the surface of the snow, while grassy mounds, stumps, trees, logs, etc., which have an actual existence some place on the earth's surface, are outlined against mountains of snow in all kinds of fantastic shapes. Some of these objects are distorted and magnified into the shapes of huge, ungainly animals and reptiles of enormous proportions.

The fogs and mists are driven across these waters by the winds, and, as the objects referred to loom up in the flying vapors, they appear like living creatures, and seem to be actually moving rapidly across the plain. At other times they appear high in the air, but this is a characteristic of the northern mirages that are seen near the seashore. When the vapors and mists are driven out to sea the images mirrored in them appear to be lunging through the waters at a terrific rate of speed, dashing the spray high in the air, while huge breakers roll over them and onward toward the mountainous islands beyond, and against which they all appear to be dashing.

Monstrous serpents, apparently several hundred feet long, sometimes with riders on their backs, men on horseback thirty to fifty feet in height, animals and birds of all kinds of horrible shapes and colors, seem to be scurrying past, racing and chasing each other, until they are lost in twilight fogs or dashed to pieces upon the rocky islands mentioned above, and which are twenty miles out at sea.

The Children's Sleep.

A physician in an address before a woman's club on the care of children's health, recently said that it is criminal to attempt to save a little money by not giving every child in the family a bed to himself. The physician also emphasized the need of early sleep. "It is so easy," he said, "to let a nervous child lose sleep in the early evening, when he or she should be hard at it. When a physician prescribes some important remedy that must be taken and which is not pleasant, a mother feels that it is time well expended to coax and wheedle, and even bribe the little one to swallow it. Spend just as much thought and effort in getting your child to sleep every night, if he does not fall off his chair at the evening meal from drowsiness, as the normal child should. Give up concerts, theaters, parties, anything till you have secured for the nervous, twitching boy or girl the benign habit of sleep. Coax him to his room, give him a quick sponge bath, tuck him in his single bed, with a light wool blanket over him besides the sheet, and in a lowered light sit by him and talk to him till he is quieted. Tell him gentle, soothing stories, nothing to excite his imagination, and when he is finally asleep, have the room cool, dark and quiet. Don't let him try to sleep in a room which has been a sitting room all the evening, without having it thoroughly refilled with fresh outdoor air, which may be accomplished by throwing windows wide open for fifteen minutes."

The Buffalo Nearly Exterminated.

Gen. A. W. Greeley, of the War Department, in a paper read recently, deplored the wholesale slaughter of the buffaloes which has been going on for 50 years and which has well-nigh exterminated this useful animal. From the lips of an old army officer he ascertained that in the valley of the Arkansas he saw in the '40s an enormous herd of buffalo terrifying even to look upon. The old army officer says he crossed at right angles a moving herd which was 75 miles in width and so dense as to render travel dangerous. The general himself saw 50 miles of territory literally covered with bison. In the winter of '75 and '76 he knew of 164,000 buffalo skins being brought into Griffin, Tex.

Equal to the Emergency.

Chinese cheap labor may yet ruin New Zealand. In Otago, where there are a good many Scotchmen, a contract for road mending was awarded to the lowest bid, which was signed "MacPherson." When the bidder appeared to sign the contract he was yellow and had a pigtail. "But," said the official who met him, "your name cannot be MacPherson."

"All right," answered the Chinaman, "nobody catches contact in Otago unless he named Mac," and the contract was signed.

Have To.

"Will you mind the baby, Jack, for a little while?" asked Mrs. Elsmore. "I shall have to, I s'pose," replied Elsmore. "The kid won't mind me."—Buffalo Times.