Black Rock

By RALPH CONNOR

(Continued from First Page.

I had no doubt of it, for at that moment she came out to us with little Marjorie in her arms.

"You have shown Mrs. Mavor to her room, mother, I hope," said Graeme, but she only smiled and said:

"Run away with your horses, you silly boy!" at which he solemnly shook his head. "Ah, mother, you are deep. Who would have thought it of you?"

That evening the manse overflowed with joy, and the days that followed were like dreams set to sweet music.

But for sheer wild delight nothing in my memory can quite come up to the demonstration organized by Graeme, with assistance from Nixon, Shaw, Sandy, Abe, Geordie and Baptiste, in honor of the arrival in camp of Mr. and Mrs. Craig, and in my opinion it added something to the occasion that after all the cheers for Mr. and Mrs. Craig had died away and after all the hats had come down Baptiste, who had never taken his eyes from that radiant face, should suddenly have swept the crowd into a perfect storm of cheers by excitedly seizing his toque and calling out in his shrill voice:

"By gar! Tree cheer for Mrs. Mavor!"

And for many a day the men of Black Rock would easily fall into the old and well loved name, but up and down the line of construction, in all the camps beyond the Great Divide, the new name became as dear as the old had ever been in Black Rock.

Those old wild days are long since gone into the dim distance of the past. They will not come again, for we have fallen into quiet times. But often in my quietest hours I felt my heart pause in its beat to hear again that strong, clear voice, like the sound of a trumpet, bidding us to be men, and I think of them all—Graeme, their chief; Sandy, Baptiste, Geordie, Abe, the Campbells, Nixon, Shaw, all stronger, better, for their knowing of him, and then I think of Billy asleep under the pines and of old man Nelson with the long grass waving over him in the quiet churchyard, and all my nonsense leaves me, and I bless the Lord for all his benefits, but chiefly for the day I met the missionary of Black Rock in the lumber camp among the Selkirks.

THE END.

The Rival "Busters"

A Story of a Mining Camp

By CARLOS PILGRIM

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"HOWLY mother, gintlemin!" argued Dillon. "'Tis a matther av importance. Wud ye have another shootin' Donnybrook an' me a-bearin' av all the divilmint, same as 'twuz last year? Wid the riputashun av the camp too! In the name av innisince, have ye no heads for an emergency?"

Dillon was clearly in earnest, and when a man of his racial characteristics is in earnest things are likely to happen, whether the scene of action be Spitzbergen or Timbuktu. His indignation at our stupidity—at the mayor's, the sheriff's and mine—was offensive, but we could offer no suggestion that might stand for us as combatant. There were men in the camp with official title, and men very prone to swift and accurate shooting, but these collectively were as naught before the breath of Dillon.

Galena was like most other northwestern mining towns. If at all distinguishable from them, it was by a slight accentuation of that air of bonhomie which is more or less apparent on the visages of all communities of the genus. In plan and construction it was certainly in nowise individual. The single main thoroughfare, extending in a parallel line midway between the flanking gulch sides; the various short traverse cuts, the littered shaft workings and entrances to a number of mines, the thin sprinkling of stores and semidisreputable hotels, the ungovernable flux of wide open and wholly disreputable saloons and faro banks—these were features of utmost generality. But if there was that additional coloring I have just noted it was imparted by the enforcing personality of Dillon, who owned and genially presided over one of the biggest and brightest and most bemirrored of the combination saloons and gambling resorts.

Conceive, then, his popularity. He was the patron, the philanthropist, the benefactor, of the town. And thus was it that we were called in conference to be assistants to him in one of his great humanitarian functions, the mayor and the sheriff by reason of their political headship, I by some small commercial standing, being at that time the Galena manager of the M. Mining and Smelting company. The Fourth of July was hard upon us, and Dillon was committee hunting that action might be taken to prepare for the advent of this glorious day. On the preceding Fourth no such special arrangements had been made, and a series of wild, deplorable events had come off, events that were to be remembered long after Galena had passed into the obscurity of most boom camps. Only seven men in the town had not been hilariously and rampageously drunk, and these seven were kept very miserable and engaged. Three of the thirsty majority had died, and it had cost Dillon and some others the entire refitting of their establishments.

The mayor, the sheriff and I sat in a back room of the saloon listening intently to Dillon's harangue. After he had given us every opportunity to suggest ways and means for the day of entertainment, fruitlessly, he elucidated to us his own idea of a programme, which was voted on and adopted by unanimous and immediate consent. This narrative deals solely with the first number of the programme, so you will be compelled to surmise the others from it.

"We will begin," says Dillon, "in the mornin' wid what ye might dishignate a toornymint. This is the way av it: We wull have rounded up a bunch av thim divils av bronchos, an' we wull also have rounded up a bunch av jolly bhoys. We wull beguile the bhoys to the backs av the bronchos an' wull give the best busther av thim a foine, fat purse, which he wull spind immejutly. This, ye may understhand, is legitimut, wid excoitement enough to kape aff the raw idge av their timper. Thin we wull"— But this is as much as concerns us.

Now, that species of rough riding which is known in the west United States under the provincialism "broncho busting" is not, as a business, nice. It is brutal and violent under any conditions, but when resorted to on gala occasions as a sport it has elements of character that would have endeared it, mildly at least, to the amphitheaters of mediæval Rome. I have only once seen it in this aspect, though not unfamiliar with the regular forty dollar per month skirmishes.

Galena was a busy little town. Every man in Montana that could distinguish pay stuff from pyrites of iron extolled it, and it was an actual center of a vast expanse of stock country. Dillon's was the extreme inner point of this centrality, the meeting house and council chamber of prominent citizens, the rendezvous of a wide assortment of the erring human animal. Dillon had need to be a splendid whip, and he was. Skittish leaders or sullen wheelers, vicious or gentle, all alike felt the strong hand on the box.

A goodly purse was collected against the coming of the popular event. Dillon's ante (his own word) was a hundred, and a number of others came down handsomely. But in the interval between the statement of the idea and the day of fulfillment there arose the necessity for some modification in the plans. Dillon had relied on procuring a number of bad and unbroken horses and on having the many volunteer riders break them on time, or something of that sort. When the trial was made, however, it was found impossible to bring together the required number of sure enough bad horses—that is, horses which could be depended on to make excitement under any circumstances—so a big list of "chapped" and sombreroed competitors could not consequently be accommodated.

It was decided then that each of the two great cow valleys which converged near Galena should set up its best man, the most superlatively regal of its king busters. This concentrated interest, which, when the eve of the great day really arrived, was possibly several degrees beyond blood temperature.

The morning of the Fourth dawned in all the chaste radiance of July in the foothills, such a day as recompenses a man for a year lived in a hut 150 miles from the nearest railroad artery and, as they say in Montana, "only half a mile from hades." As was my invariable wont, I rose early and, hearing that the competition ponies were in the town corral, strolled down to catch a glimpse of them. There were two ponies corralled fast enough, and I surveyed them from the fence during the burning of a cigarette, going over their various points with much interest. They were wholly dissimilar except for that single qualification which made them especially precious—their plain, staring malignancy.

The one was a beauty, dark bay, of fair height, peaked and slender, clean, wiry, Roman nosed and with the wildest pair of glass eyes I ever saw in any brute. The look of him was actually carnivorous. He had several dead men to his record, they told me, and he certainly did have a proper cast for it. I almost doubted if his Achilles existed. The other was a far more unhandsome type, a low, flat backed lump of a horse, dirty buckskin in color, mane and fore top moppish and unkempt, low hung head and slits of eyes scarce opened to the thickness of a knife blade. The bay should have been a small horse of blood, but the most unlikely jack tar could not have mistaken the other for anything but an unmixed lunkhead. My sympathy went first to the man who must bestride the symmetrical bay, but I had also seen too many cayuses and southern mustangs to disdain the rank, thick legged yellow.

Directly after breakfast those ranch people from the rival valleys and from all adjacent sections who had not been fortunate enough to get in the night before began to concentrate in the camp. Throughout the morning they continued to arrive, singly, in twos and threes and in motley, jangling, picturesque cavalcades, all sorts of men on every conceivable kind of mount, for the most part blithesome and jocose, humors well befitting the lax play day of their singularly hard life. Dillon's place was in a swirl. The barroom of course had its full quota, strong men there with a purpose. Faro, stud, draw, whist, all were going, and the chips rattled gleefully.

It was worth a curious man's while to sit back and look on. Big men, young and old, bronzed, weather beaten and grizzled, thrashed about like a mob of public school boys on the last day of the term. Rough, swashing jests were exchanged; song and repartee bearing dangerously close to ribaldry banished all semblance of quiet, and ever and anon some too exuberant cowpuncher must needs be restrained from emptying his gun into a mirror or through a window. The makeup of the concourse was most cosmopolitan. There were Mexicans and Swedes, Texans and Vermonters, crossbreeds and Englishmen, New Yorkers and Missourians, each contributing his stock mannerisms and all blent into one congruous picture of the early inland northwest in its gayest neck handkerchief.

Dillon drew me out to the veranda. "By me sowl, 'twull be beauthiful," says he. "We have a brace av the beasts as wud misharse the divil, an' the bhoys are foine an' achin' for the sport. Ye'll see it the day, me son." He was in merriest spirits himself, and I should have enjoyed some of the effervescence of his rollicking blarney, but his unswerving sense of duty to the day compelled him to drink more frequently than I had reason to believe my experience and capacity would permit, so I was forced to abjure his society.

About 10 he got on a table somehow and announced the riding and invited the contesting busters up to throw dice for choice of horse. This called forth uproarious yells of applause. One of the contestants, the north valley representative, was not present, but his mentor was, with full power to act. This latter, however, an old ranch foreman with badly bowed legs and a crooked back, called out renewed cheers by remarking that he reckoned it didn't make "much diff'rence about

He announced the riding

the throwin', as Curlew is satisfied with a'most any hoss."

But the south valley contingent demurred at this, and Dillon routed it as unparliamentary, so old Joe and the south valley man cast for choice, and the throw was Joe's. He gruffly chose the horse that should be nearer the corral gate. Then they shook out again for precedence in order of riding, and this time the south valley broncho buster won, electing to ride second. There was one other contestant, who did not throw. But I am anticipating my story.

After these preliminaries all roads pointed corralward, the exodus even stripping Dillon's bar of its deft attendants. The corral was situated at the open extremity of the gulch, on a flat of much lower level than that of Dillon and the other main division of the town.

When I got down, the flat was cleared for action and the man called Curlew was preparing to ride. It was my first glimpse of him, a tall, loose jointed, long limbed (hence the nickname), red haired boy of perhaps five and twenty, drawling and good natured, with the most surpassing and unaffected air of nonchalance imaginable. He was evidently the equestrian idol of his valley, if one dare assume broncho busting to be equestrianism, for the advice and encouragement that were volunteered him would have bolstered a much more nervous man. He smiled back jocularly and under old Joe's tutelage discarded all superfluous apparel and fittings, buckling his straps well about him.

On the arrival of the crowd at the corral the glass eyed bay had been nearer the gate, and so 'twas with him that Curlew had to deal. The rules of the contest exacted that each man saddle his own horse, and, lariat in hand, the hatless, red crowned boy entered the corral alone. He was slow, almost listless, in his movements, but there was a loose, easy grace to him, and when his rope arm shot out from a trail it was as swift and as sure as the stroke of a moccasin. He was forced to snub and throw the horse and then hood the glass eyes. Saddling was a matter to take the enthusiasm out of a man new to the work, but at length the trick was over, and Curlew signaled for the gate.

He had barely time to draw his sleeve across his perspiring face when the half choked and bewildered pony had leaped, like a flash, to his feet. At the same fractional part of a second Curlew was lightly ensconced in the saddle, stirruped and pulling off the pony's hood. Blinded by the sun, dazed and frightened by the weight on his back, the bay stood quivering for a short space, but a stinging cut from Curlew's quirt discovered his bondage to him. Up he reared, straight and unhesitating, till, losing his balance, he dropped over backward with an ugly thud, the broad horn of the cow saddle digging into the ground just where Curlew should have been.

But the red haired boy was at one side, waiting. He must have been quick as light, for I assure you the play of the pony was not slow. Again and again the bay rose in the air and repeated the backward fall, Curlew each time eluding it and each time swinging in the saddle as the playful brute came to his feet. It was all incredibly rapid, and how the boy handled his long, loose jointed legs is yet a mystery to me. There were twelve of these backward half somersaults in that ninety foot corral, and then the maneuver was given over, forming merely an unostentatious prelude to the real tactics of the fight.

With a shrill whistle of rage that brought my heart against my ribs the bay made several sharp, sidelong jumps and then took to running. Through the corral gate, across the flat, up the steep pitch and into the town he went, the whole company of interested spectators following at their variously best paces. Curlew sat him with swaying ease, the hackamore rope hanging loose in his hand. He made no attempt to stop or to guide.

In the midst of the town the run ended in the inevitable buck, and thenceforth the fun waxed fast and furious. We were not mistaken in our horse. The brute was all his looks indicated, and more. The battle lasted only some fifteen minutes, but in that short space of time he called into active use every resource of equine trickery and threw himself into every startling contortion that horse anatomy permits of. He bucked straight and sideways and turned and fell and reared and kicked, squealing again and again in that fierce, unholy manner, till it seemed impossible that the plucky red haired rider could longer endure the awful back wrenching strain. A fall, too, meant death, for the horse would have slashed him before he touched ground or struck him with front feet as he lay. During the first twelve or fourteen minutes of the fight that boy's life was not worth the value of a cigarette. Between rage and fear the horse was stark mad and had there been the sign of an opening would have leaped headlong into the reputed inferno a half a mile below.

The plain straightaway bucking was in itself something to wonder at. He seemed to go second story high each time and when just at the apex of his jump would fling both fore legs above his head in approved bridle fighter fashion or lash out behind with such wickedness as to make his back almost perpendicular. Once he bucked into the blacksmith shop, where only Curlew's unfailing coolness saved his brains. Another blind leap landed the crazy creature on the hotel veranda, from which he immediately threw himself off backward. A shout of horror went out from the more impressionable onlookers, but by some strange skill or fortuity the boy cleared himself and was in the saddle again when the horse scrambled to his feet.

As the moments wore on and his whole repertory of strength and strategy was worked through without in the least unfixing his rider the white eyed pony began to lose heart. It was the first time that any man had been so tenacious of grip, and gradually his leaps became weaker and less vicious. Then Curlew's quirt and blood seeking spurs urged him to more vigorous efforts, but even these could not much longer sustain the engagement. Dripping with blood and sweat, nearly dead with fatigue and entirely shorn of his pride, he finally succumbed and permitted himself to be guided about at the rider's will. A heavy throated cheer burst from the crowd, and Curlew, rather pale and weak, but ever smiling, was rapturously dragged from the saddle and carried into Dillon's, an inert monument of glory to his merry and demonstrative friends.

After the hero, his worshipers, the antagonistic party and all outsiders had been duly refreshed, which required some little time, we bent ourselves again to the matter in hand and prepared to witness the second bout of the man against horse battle.

There was almost as wide a difference in the appearance of the two

He was helpless.

riders as between the bay and the buckskin. The south valley champion was much shorter than Curlew and better knit. If I had not seen the confusing dexterity of the lanky, red haired boy, I should have esteemed this the likelier man. His movements were alert, and he showed much experience, in complexion almost black, with a bearded and somewhat sinister face, "Charley Rawlins, late av N'Mixico an' bad when he's dhrinkin'," as Dillon catalogued him.

The buckskin pony remained in his downcast posture and allowed the New Mexican to saddle him unresistingly, merely cocking his hairy ears, one forward and the other back, and watching behind through the tail of his slitted eye. I was standing alongside old Joe during this peaceful overture and noted the old man's chuckle, grim and ominous.

Charley led his mount out from the corral to the flat and, jamming his finely worked Mexican hat down over his eyes, vaulted cleanly to his seat. The yellow pony waked up immediately and took the buck, not wildly and ferociously, as the bay had done, but in a calm, matter of fact sort of way that convinced one it was his natural gait. Just as another horse might have galloped or trotted so did this beast buck and for two blessed hours maintained the pace without a falter. Nor in all that heartbreaking period did his lineal progress exceed 100 yards. It was most astonishing. Not one superfluous movement was made. He simply kept on and on, each jump being almost semicircular—that is, landing with his head where his tail had started from, and vice versa.

This is what the cowpunchers call changing ends, and it is not difficult to imagine the effect of such a protracted merry go round sensation on the rider. The bucking was neither high nor fierce, but the strain of that continuous swirl must have been racking. There was one slight variation which the scrubby buckskin allowed himself in his system, though this was of such nature as to be rather disconcerting to a rider with a head already far from steady. It was to turn in the air after the usual fashion, but, instead of alighting on stiffened legs, to fall clumsily on one side, the pony saving himself by bending a fore leg back under him. It was an ugly trick to evade, and the black New Mexican must have been clear grit to hold his own so long. His face grew pallid and drawn, and after awhile his stomach revolted.

At the close of the second hour he was helpless. His will was still in the thing, but his body was limp and ineffective, and the blood trickled from his nose and ears. The pony still worked with the monotonous regularity of a steam exhaust, and the end was unquestionably near.

When it came, the man was sprawled at one side, and the horse immediately lapsed into his usual drooping attitude of watchful sleepiness. Some of us ran to assist Rawlins, who lay just as he had fallen, too weak to rise. But he waved us back. His face was malignant with shame and anger and distorted by pain. Altogether, with the pallor and the blood stredked beard, he was not an exhilarating sight. Rolling over on his side, he raised himself partially on an elbow and before we could close in on him had drawn his Colt's and fired. The big gun spoke sharply, and with a moan that was almost human the buckskin pony lurched heavily to the ground.

We reached Rawlins in time to take the smoking revolver from his nerveless grasp, but as he fell back again I heard him mutter thickly: "There, curse ye, ye mud skinned hellhound! Ye'll wear no more men out!"

The prostrate broncho buster's friends had taken him up, and Dillon was in the midst of a brilliant address, awarding with much ornate language the purse to Curlew, when an incident in the form of anticlimax took the floor from the speaker and wound up the sport with a hearty burst of good natured acclamation.

I had the history of this incident afterward. It seems that the boys of the town—the juveniles, I mean—had organized and schemed to place an unregistered and unexpected entry in the contest, and their scheme was eminently successful and amusing. The camp supported a little half breed rat of about twelve years, a marvel in his love for and command over horses. He must have been born and reared upon their backs, so easily did he become them. It was this urchin, Pedro by name, who was elected to represent the younger faction in the riding. There was one difficulty that would have baffled most boys—no bad horse was forthcoming. But Pedro was so extremely indifferent as to the nature or build of his mount that even this was an easy adjustment. At the extreme upper end of the town was a butcher's cow corral, and in it was confined a bunch of cattle new from the range. One of these, a great red and white four-year-old steer, was selected, and Pedro eagerly started on his ride to fame.

Dillon was getting well warmed to his much prepared and patriotic oration when Pedro and the frantic steer appeared, rushing down the pitch from the town above. There was an unrestrained howl from the assemblage, in which even Dillon joined, and the dirty, daredevil brat shot out an answering grin from the careening back of his astonished steer. It was a thing to make that old gulch quiver with laughter. Some one had dressed the boy especially for the game. He had on a pair of heavy fringed, full sized "chaps," at least eight inches too long for him and only kept from entirely covering his feet by the shanks of a pair of huge Mexican spurs, all bells and bangles. His impish face was surmounted by a five inch sombrero; a heavy quirt was in one hand, and in the other was a coil of rawhide lariat, which was looped only over the steer's horns. And how that animal was twisting himself, head down and tail up! But the boy clung like a barnacle, by what means I have no conjecture. It is well known that a steer has no withers, that he can buck through the cinches of any saddle, and a cowboy without his saddle is not formidable. Yet there was that lean young heathen, hampered by the awkward trappings they had put on him, perched on his arching, ungirdled steed with all the pert composure of a tomtit on a pump handle, which is old Joe's simile.

"Cum aff av that, ye young limb!" shouted Dillon as the steer rushed madly by us. The boy waited, however, till the crowd was passed, and then, skillfully twitching his rope from the steer's horns, slid harmlessly to the ground. He could scarcely walk for the grotesque accouterments, but when he did reach us he was [illegible] to the Plot ously.

"Give the money to the kid," said Curlew laconically. "That's a trick I can't do." And amid clamors of commendation and assent the half breed urchin was given the purse.

Men and Food.

Cassius wanted to know "upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed that he is grown so great." Some antiquarian has been making an investigation into the diet of the New England Caesars, including Governor Winslow, Daniel Webster and others. He finds that they or their ancestors breakfasted on hasty pudding, pea soup flavored with pork, squash, turnips and onions; dined on the same, with rye pudding, brown bread and an occasional fowl, and supped on fresh fish, with vegetables.

But Cassius did not really think that greatness had its root in meat and drink, for he said, "The fault, dear Brutus, is * * * in ourselves, that we are underlings," after declaring that "men at some time are masters of their fates."

He was right. It was not pea soup and rye bread in the east that made Webster, nor was it salt pork in the west that raised Lincoln until he overtopped all others in his generation.—Youth's Companion.

A Common Snake.

The common snake, which bears the scientific name of Tropidonotus natrix, is one species of a genus (tropidonotus) which extends over Europe and North America and from northern Asia to north Australia, there being seventeen or eighteen Indian species alone. Our common snake may serve as an example of the largest family into which serpents are divided—the family colubride—of which there are upward of 165 species in India alone. The family contains most of the harmless snakes, and it is also illustrated by a small snake, Coronella austraca, which some years ago was discovered to be an inhabitant of Dorsetshire and Hampshire. The coronella feeds exclusively on lizards, slow worms and small snakes. Though harmless, it will bite.—Quarterly Review.

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