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town, but I never knew him to offer a reward for information before."

"Well, I'm much obliged to you. Go to Ricketts' office and pick up his dollar, but don't say I advised it. By the way, wouldn't you break the rules of the telegraph company if you divulged the purport of any message that passed through your hands?"

A look of trouble, almost of fear, came over the young man's face.

"If a telegram is secret," he said, "the sender usually writes it in cipher."

"Quite so, but even in that case wouldn't you be punished if it became known that you had shown Mr. Ricketts a private dispatch entrusted to your care?"

"Certainly," admitted the operator, with growing uneasiness, "but I have not shown your telegram to anybody, and what I told you was entirely in confidence."

"Oh, you needn't fear my rounding on you. I am merely endeavoring to put you in possession of a dollar without getting your neck in a noose. Don't you see that you are placing yourself entirely at Mr. Ricketts' mercy?"

"But you," protested the frightened young man, "advised me to do so."

"Undoubtedly. I want you to get the dollar, but not to place yourself in jeopardy. From what I saw of Ricketts this morning I would not like to be in his power. Yet his dollar is just as good as another man's, and I want you to attach it with safety and profit to yourself. Let me have another telegraph blank."

Stranleigh wrote rapidly:

"Spurlock Detective Agency, Chicago.

"I want to be put into communication with Stanley Armstrong, who left Chicago on foot ten days ago, for the west, and am willing to pay one hundred dollars for the job. Edmund Stranleigh, White's Hotel, Bleachers, Wyoming."

"There," said his lordship, passing over the sheet to the operator, "you show that to our inquisitive friend, Ricketts, but don't send it over the line."

Stranleigh slept that night at the local tavern, and shortly after breakfast next morning the telegraph operator came across with a very satisfactory message from New York. The sender anticipated no difficulty in finding Armstrong. So, paying his bill at the hotel and ordering his horse, Stranleigh began his return journey. He saw no more of Ricketts, who, if on any trail, was following the wrong one.

Dusk had fallen as he was about to emerge into the clearing which in daylight would have afforded him a sight of Armstrong's house. Suddenly and stealthily he found himself surrounded by six armed men, and the voice of Jim Dean broke the stillness.

"Good evening, Mr. Stranleigh. I must ask you to get down from your horse."

"Willingly," replied the rider. "I confess I have had enough of him for one day."

"Supper is ready for you at the bunk house."

Man Proposes; Woman—?

(Continued from Page 5)

walked—and I could whistle! The more I did these things, the more fascinated he became.

Most probably you can guess it. We went on long romantic walks, and you can imagine me stalking along with giant strides, nearly whistling with my teeth out! I smile when I think of it now, but it's a smile of tenderness because those walks with Fred are among my happiest memories. One afternoon I must have been carrying on like a calliope in seven league boots, for I aroused Fred to such a pitch of enchantment that he proposed—and proposed too well. I expressed my surprise in suitable terms and accepted him.

"Why at the bunk house? I am more than satisfied with the fare at Mr. Armstrong's."

"We'd like a little private conversation with you."

"In that case, Mr. Dean, you could hardly choose a better place than this."

"We're a kindly set of chaps, and couldn't think of keeping a hungry man out here."

"But I'm not hungry."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Stranleigh, you come with us, either peaceably, or by force; whichever you like."

"Oh, I'm willing enough, of course. I should be ungrateful if I gave unnecessary trouble, while accepting your hospitality. I may add that I am unarmed, so if you keep your guns in readiness, you need fear no reprisal on my part."

"That's all right," responded Dean. "We're not easily scared, but we are prepared to protect ourselves if you try any funny business."

"Will my horse be taken to the barn?"

"Sure; your horse will be put in its old quarters, and well cared for."

"Then I'd be glad if the man who takes it would tell Miss Armstrong that I have arrived safely, and will give her an account of my journey when next I have the pleasure of meeting her."

"I'm sorry Peter can't carry messages. I've already told Miss Armstrong that your horse will be brought back; that I saw you off on the east-bound train, all of which is true. You've brought back the horse, and you did go east on the train. Miss Armstrong thinks you have become tired of waiting for her father, and that you've gone back East."

"I am to regard myself as your prisoner, then?"

"Prisoner isn't a pretty word, and we are not entitled to call ourselves jailors, but if you don't mind looking on it that way, it's all the same to us."

"Well, Mr. Dean, I'm your man in every sense of the word. Let us begin our amicable journey. I long for the bunk house."

"You will keep silent? No shouting or calling for help? There's no help to be had, anyhow, and a noise would merely scare the women."

"I recognize the necessity for silence. Indeed, my whole future conduct while with you will be governed by the strictest secrecy. When I get tired of the bunk house, I shall merely cut all your throats while you are asleep, and will do it in the quietest and gentlest manner."

Dean laughed.

"Oh, I guess we can take care of our throats, but I'm much obliged for the suggestion, which may come in handy—if you get funny, as I said before."

They reached the bunk house by a circuitous route. A fine fire of logs was blazing on the wide hearth, for at that elevation, even in summer, a fire was good to look at when night came on.

(Continued in the next number of THE SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE.)

And now I turn again to the photographs of my bridesmaids. Seven of them are married now. We were chums at school together and have never quite forgotten our habit of exchanging confidences. Besides, the question of proposals has always been a hobby of mine, and in riding my hobby I have been assisted by two important qualifications: a woman's curiosity and a woman's intuition.

Add these reasons together and what is the total? It is this: I know how my bridesmaids received their proposals just as well as I know how I received my own.

Alice was the first. Fred and I



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