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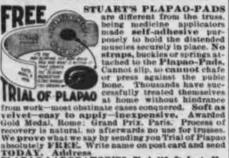
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A Game of Wits

IT WAS two hours after midnight when his lordship slipped down from his bunk. The fire had long since gone out, and the stone chimney was reasonably cool. His captors were sleening soundly and the climbing of sleeping soundly, and the climbing of that ample flue presented no difficulty to an athletic young man, who in his time had ascended the Matterborn. The inside of the chimney offered to the amateur sweep walls of rough stone which projected here and there, stone which projected here and there, forming an effective, if unequal, ladder. He attained the top with such ease that he wondered he had remained so long a prisoner. Descending the roof silently, he let himself down to the top of the lean-to which acted as supply-store, and dropped lightly to the ground. It was a night of clear moonlight, and Stranleigh smiled to think how nearly he must represent the popular idea of the represent the popular idea of the devil, covered as he was with soot from head to foot.

He made directly down the hill to the farm house by the stream, and risked a few minutes in washing his risked a few minutes in washing his face in the rapid current. He now took off his boots, the better to enact the part of burgiar. The doors of the house, he knew, were never locked. First he secured his favorite magazine rifle and a large quantity of cartridges, then, as, after all, he was entitled to the board he paid for, he penetrated softly to the kitchen. Here he secured several loaves and a cooked ham, together with other things he needed, including a supply of tobacco; and thus, overloaded as he had rarely needed, including a supply of tobacco; and thus, overloaded as he had rarely been in his life, he stole quietly outside, slipped his feet into his boots, and slowly climbed the hill to the silver cavern. Depositing therein his goods and chattels, he examined his store carefully to learn whether there was anything more he required to stand a siege.

was anything more he required to stand a siege.

Bright as was the moonlight out-side, the cavern was of inky black-ness, so Stranleigh determined on another expedition to the house, and brought back candles and an armful of bedclothes.

"And now for the night's work," said to himself. Having lit a candle, which he placed at the remote end of the cave, he began picking up stones and with them built a wall across the mouth of the pit. No Roman wall was mouth of the pit. No Roman wall was ever built with greater care, and no Roman wall ever contained within itself such possibilities of wholesale obliteration, because the structure was intersticed with sticks of dynamite, which Stranleigh carried with most cautious tenderness from the rear to the front of the cavern. When his cautious tenderness from the rear to the front of the cavern. When his task was completed, the moon had sunk, and the misty, luminous grey of the eastern sky betokened the ap-proach of dawn. The young man was thoroughly tired, and with a sigh of relief stretched himself out on the bedclothes he had brought from the ranch house.

THE early sun shining on his face awakened him. He knew from experience that the bunk house men were not afflicted with the vice of early rising. There was no aperture in their habitation, unless the door was open, through which the sun might reach them. He was therefore not surprised that no one was visible near his sleeping quarters. He breakfasted in peace, alternating slices of bread with slices of ham, thus constructing

with slices of ham, thus constructing some admirable sandwiches.

A providential jug, which doubtless in its time had contained whisky, was one of the utensils left when the mine was abandoned. Stranleigh took this, and stepping over the dangerous wall, filled it three or four times at the rushing cataract, rinsing out all indication of its former use. He brought it back, filled with very He brought it back, filled with very clear and cold water. Stranleigh sat down where he could

tiently.

The laggard door sentinel was the first to rouse himself. The broad door opened, and Jim Dean, palpably bewildered, stepped out. With hand shading his eyes, he minutely examined the landscape, slowly turning his head from left to right as he scrutinized the distant horizon and the tinized the distant horizon and the ground intervening. Stranleigh, kneeling, rested his rifle on top of the wall, and as Jim's left ear, a rather prom-inent feature, became fully visible, the young man fired.

Jim's action instantaneously verified the Indian romances of Stranleigh's youth. He sprang into the air and clapped a hand upon his wounded ear. He was at that moment the most astonished man on the western hemis-phere. His first instinct being to bolt for cover, he did so without pausing to close the door, which opened out-wards, and this broad piece of woodwork now offered a much more prom-inent target than Jim's ear had done moment before.

Stranleigh, exercising a care that seemed unnecessary with so big a tar-get, fired out the cartridges of his magazine, then immediately restocked it, and shot away the second charge. Putting in a third load, he sat there with his customary nonchalance, awaiting the turn of events. In that clear atmosphere, and with his sharp vision, he saw that he had accom-plished his intention, and punctured the letter "S" on the panel of the open door.

MEANWHILE, there was commotion in the bunk house. The first sharp report, accompanied by Jim's yell, woke every man within. The subsequent fusillade engendered a belief that the enemy was in possession of a maxim gun, and brought every man to maxim gun, and brought every man to
the floor, thankful that he was under
better cover than if he stood behind
the door, the panel of which all the
bullets had penetrated.

"How did he escape?" demanded
one, addressing Jim, who was holding
his left hand to his ear.

"Hanged if I know," said the
wounded man impatiently.

"Hanged if I know," said the wounded man, impatiently.

"Well, you ought to know, You were on guard."

"See here," said Jim, exasperated. "He's got out some way, and he's got his gun, some way. He's holding us up, and we must make terms with him."

"But where is he?"

"The bullet came from the mine. One of you boys throw up your hands; go outside and hail him."
At this command Jim met the first

rebellion against his authority.

"Go outside yourself. It's you that's brought all this down on us. You shot him through the shoulder; you proposed capturing him, and it was you, asleep, last night, that let him

Jim did not refute their charges.

"All right," he said, "I'll go out, and you sit here while I palayer with him."

Raising his hands above his head, Dean stepped across the threshold into the open, and stood like an oriental about to begin his prayers. He saw at once the wall that had been built, during the night, and then caught sight of Stranleigh standing behind it. Pulling out a white handbehind it. Pulling out a white hand-kerchief and waving it, Dean pro-ceeded towards the mine.

"Have you got a revolver?" shouted Stranleigh.

"No," answered Dean.

"Then put down your hands, and approach as a man should."
Jim obeyed.
"Stand where you are," said Stranleigh, when the other was within four or five yards of the wall. "I see your