RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA. CHIEF

the man to memory-some way the

sight of him had turned his mind back

to army days, yet the two would not

connect themselves definitely. As he

thrust his contribution into the box,

"Well, bless me, if here ain't Tom

Shelby, lookin' like a white man, and

blowin' his money like a good sport.

How's things on the Cottonwood?

Fine as silk, hey? See yer later, Tom.

No, yer don't, Ramsay! You tried

that game on me once before. I'm

There was a moment's delay, while

Ramsay reluctantly dug down into his

jeans for an amount satisfactory to

the party in charge, and Shelby, still

struggling with his elusive memory,

"Say, Mac, who was this guy, any-

"Old Dad, you mean? Furst I knew

of the fellow was about three years

ago, blacksmithin' down at Kelly's

camp. When that moved on he come

up here, an' has been hangin' 'round

ever since. Wa'n't such a bad sort.

'cept when in liquor; a smart ol' devil,

too; read everything he could get hold

"Do you happen to know if he was

"Come to think of it, Tom, I do.

Once when he was drunk, he showed

me his discharge papers. Lemme see;

h-l, yes-the ol' cock wus a sergeant

in the Sixth cavalry. That's all right,

Ramsay-pass along. Now, whose

Shelby drifted along with the line,

which broke into groups, waiting si-

lently for the ceremonies to be con-

cluded and the body lowered into the

grave before wending their way back

to the delights of Ponca. The ranch-

man lingered with the others while

the preacher solemnly consigned the

body to dust, but when he saw the

quartette climbing back into the wag-

on for a final song, he promptly

joined a number who were attempting

to escape. Shelby paused and glanced

back; the distance was too great to

distinguish faces, yet there was no

mistaking the pathetic figure of the

girl standing in loneliness beside the

still open grave. She had not particu-

larly appealed to him before, but now

his heart made vague response to her

It was doubtless this lingering mem-

loneliness.

next; step up lively, boys."

bent over and asked hoarsely:

keepin' cases here."

ever in the army?"

way?"

of.'

McCarthy gripped him cordially.

COMRADES OF PERIL

By RANDALL PARRISH

THE FELLOW IN THE PINK SHIRT

She looked from him to the row of breathless men facing her, impatiently, her bosom rising and falling tumultuously. "And I've got to choose which one I'd rather marry ?"

"Well, yes, that is the idea crudely expressed. Not that you are compelled in any way; only we feel it highly desirable; that-well, perhaps I may say, it is the will of God that you make some such choice."

Her eyes wandered up and down the shrinking line, resting calmly on face after face. If she felt any humor in the situation, there was no expression of it visible. She retained an appearance of sullen indifference, which was almost insolent.

- "There ain't no more of 'em ?"
- "No; this is all."

"And I got to pick from these?" The preacher nodded his head, as she glanced inquiringly in his direction. The pent-up breath came in a sigh from between

her lips. "Well, if I've got to, I have, I suppose, and so far as I can see it don't make no great difference. I'll take the fellow sittin' over there on the window—the one with the pink shirt."

And so they were married. But they didn't live happily over fter, because this marriage occurs right at the beginning of the story. Moreover there was no love or even acquaintance between the young couple. Besides, the bride was kidnaped on her wedding day. So it was just naturally up to the bridegroom to rescue her. And in the ad-ventures that followed the young people became "Comrades of Peril," with Cupid managing the game.

Unusual? Well, it's another of those decidedly out-of-theordinary Western stories by Randall Parrish. During the last three years the Western Newspaper Union has released six serials by this popular author-and each has been a great success. Enough said.

CHAPTER I.

-1-

Return of the Wanderer. Shelby, alone in the buckboard, Grove to the summit of the ridge, halting the broncs, as his eyes swept over the scene outspread below. The anlmais, their dusty sides streaked with sweat, stopped willingly after their sixty-mile trip from the Cottonwood.

Below was a deep, narrow valley, in the midst of which Ponca spread out along the bank of the creek that gave the town its name. To Shelby, wearied with the dull plains, here was a scene of beauty.

Just beyond there was life, fresh, luxuriant, sweet; running water, luscious green grass, and above all, that which he craved most, human companionship. To be sure, he knew Ponca of old, and possessed no illusions. Ugly, dirty, unkempt, Ponca made no pretense to either cleanliness, or respectability; it possessed no pride, no hope of a future. It

door. He had expected a welcome and this strange lack of interest on the part of the citizens of Ponca had already considerably chilled his enthuslasm. Once inside, he stopped, staring about in even deeper perplexity. The big saloon was absolutely empty of patrons-the tables were unoccupied; no one was lined up in front of the long bar, and no sound of voices or of poker chips came down from the room above. The place seemed like a huge grave, and, for a brief moment, he even failed to perceive its only occupant-a red-mustached bartender in front of the mirror, industriously rubbing the immaculate glass. Thoroughly angered by this time, Shelby advanced, his footsteps muffled by

the sawdust on the floor. "What the h-l is the matter with this dump?" he demanded savagely, his fist thumping the bar. "Oh, so it's you, is it, Moran? Well, are you all that's left in Ponca?"

The red-mustached one turned indifferently, yet managed to extend i rather limp hand in fraternal greeting. "That's 'bout the size of it, Tom," he admitted gravely. "Where yer been the last six months?" "Over on the Cottonwood, ranching. Say, I ain't seen nothin' but dogs since I struck this valley. What's up? Ponca gone on the bum?" "No: she's all right mostly. Be all right tomorrow, I reckon, fer Hitchcock's outfit's comin' in with a bunch o' steers. What'll yer drink?" "Best yer've got, o' course. That looks a bit like old times, an' tastes like it. Take a snort with me, Moran. Where's Mac, an' all the boys, anyhow?"

and reached the edge of the willows before his eyes distinguished the crowd gathered in the open space beyond. It was surely some funeral; there was no doubt about that. A mass of men stood there, bare-headed in the sunshine, and beyond them, on a little knoll, a small bunch of women were crowded together, girls from the dance hall mostly, judging from their clothes and faces, although one or two older women were at the farther end. Shelby caught a glipmse of the expreacher, elevated on a box, and his ears caught the sonorous words of exhortation with which he ended his sermon. There followed a faint applause, checked instantly by McCarthy, who politely requested the bunch to stop making d-d fools of themselves. and immediately announced that the Ponca male quartette would sing "Onward, Christian Soldiers." after which those who desired would be given the opportunity to view for the last time the features of the departed. As the last dulcet strains of the hymn rolled away, McCarthy, as though anxious to preserve the lives of the singers by quick action, pushed his way once again to the front.

"Now, you bucks," he roared out tersely, "line up along them willows. I'll go first with the daughter as chief mourners, an' then the females will fall in behind. After that the rest of yer can mosey along. We're goin' ter do this up in some style, an it ain't just goin' to be showin' proper respect fer the dead, but we're agoin' ter remember the orphaned and the fatherless. Thet's the way Ponca does business. Now, chip in, gents; there's a box there at the head of the corpse. an' after yer've had a squint at Ol' Dad cough up something fer the gurl." Shelby dropped into place behind the stage agent, who recognized the newcomer with a hard handgrip and grin of welcome.

"Just blow in? We're givin' Old Calkins the time o' his career; owed me a hundred, but what the h-l do I care! Know the ol' cuss?"

"No; I just dropped around fer to pass away the time. Some spouter that fat preacher."

"Ain't he, though !" admiringly. "He sure shot off some language I never did hear afore. Yer heard our quartette, I reckon?"

"Heard it! Not being altogether deaf, I did. Hullo, the procession is about to start-so that's Old Calkins'

girl, is it?"

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He had waded the shallow waters (a white heard, with the fragment of a) talkin' ter the dominie yere about her. Tom, what is she agoin' ter do? An' scar showing on one cheek. There was something about the face strangewhat hed this town ought ter do fer her?" ly familiar, yet he could not recall

"What do you mean? They done enough, ain't they, with that swell funeral an' five hundred bucks on top of it? What more would she expect?" "She don't expect nuthin'. That

ain't her style. I got an idee she won't even accept this bunch o' coin. She's the ornariest helfer I ever saw. But that's got no bearin' on us. She's an orphan, left yere in Ponca with no visible means of support. She's a decent girl; nobody ever said nuthin' against her, and the way it looks ter me we got a moral duty ter perform. Ain't that it, Reverend?"

"That is the thought I endeavored to convey," returned the visitor from Buffalo Gap seriously. "You heard me. I presume, young man?"

"Only the last few septences," admitted Shelby. "I don't belong here, but just happened to drift in today." "Tom's ranchin' over on the Cottonwood," interrupted McCarthy, "but he's a mighty straight guy, an' I'd like ter have him express his feelin's on this yere idee o' yours, Reverend. It's rather a new one on me."

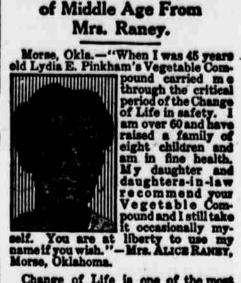
The preacher straightened up and cleared his throat.

"Well, here's the case of a young girl, seventeen or eighteen years old, who has had no experience whatever in life, suddenly left an orphan in this town, without any money or friends, so to speak. Where can she go? What can she do? There isn't a place she could earn a living here, excepting the dance hall; there isn't a place in this town she could call home. That is what I tried to make clear to Mr. McCarthy-that the men of this town ought to give her a chance. Mac here's a married man; got a wife and two daughters of his own back East and he cottoned to my idea right away." "But what is your idea?"

"Marriage, sir-marriage; honorable matrimony. I even offer my services freely. The girl should be given a husband and a home; this would assure her future and relieve Ponca of every obligation. Do you see the point?"

"Yes," admitted Shelby, yet rather dazed at the project, "but there would **As One Raised** seem to be certain obstacles in the way of such a scheme. No doubt you have considered these. Who, for instance, would marry her?"

"There isn't likely to be any trouble about that," confidently. "If she'd fix



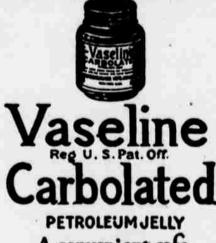
FROM FORTY-FIVE

A Word of Help to Women

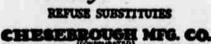
TO SIXTY

Change of Life is one of the most critical periods of a woman's existence. This good old-fashioned root and herb remedy may be relied upon to overcome the distressing symptoms which accom-pany it and women everywhere should remember that there is no other remedy known to carry women so successfully through this trying period as Lydia **E**. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

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New York

State Street

med to recognize its destiny, and be content, a mere mushroom town of the frontier, an adjunct of the cattle trade, permitted to flourish today, but as certainly doomed to perish tomorrow.

The man who sat there on the ridge gazing down, the reins held idly in his hand, his eyes following the winding of the valley, was a perfectly natural part of the picture-he belonged. Beneath the tan and dust was a smoothly shaven face, a face of twenty-five, or twenty-six, the features strong, nose somewhat prominent, lips firm and full, with dark-gray eyes shadowed by heavy lashes. In truth, he appeared all man, a certain reckless gayety about him not to be mistaken, yet as evidently not to be lightly taken advantage of.

"It certainly beats h-l," he muttered, unconsciously aloud, "that a man should dream about visiting a dump like this. Shows what sort o' place Cottonwood is to make a fellow nomesick for Ponca. Town looks kinder dead; no cattle in the corrais. He-l, what's the difference? There'll be some of the old bunch hangin' 'round, an' we'll make things hum for awhile. Come, broncs, jog along ! Let's show Ponca we're a live outfit !"

It was a rough, curving descent, the trail in places barely wide enough for the wheels, but the driver never lost control, guiding the broncos with expert hand, until they finally swung about the edge of a great rock at the bottom, and went charging at full sallop into the main street. To better express the exuberance of his feelings at this return to civilization, and announce his arrival, Shelby whipped out his gun and began shattering the atmosphere, driving the animals frantic as the sharp reports rang out over their backs.

But if any sensation was expected. It signally failed to materialize. Ponca remained deserted, and unimpressed. Long experience had either rendered the inhabitants indifferent to such a display, or else the town had gone atterly dead. The silence and desolation caused Shelby to utter an oath. and suddenly swing his team up to a hitching rack in front of McCarthy's saloon, the door of which stood inwitingly open. An instant the perplexed driver sat there, staring grimty about from end to end of the deperted street.

What the h-I" he ejaculated at last, "is up anyhow? Is this a graveyara I've got into? Lord, it can't be all the boys have got out; but something is sure dead wrong. Well, Mac's drink and gazed disconsolately about open anyhow. I'll go in and find out." He sprang out over the wheel, stif- I'll turn the broacs into Davis' corral fened from the long ride, yet standing an' then amble along," he said slowly. erect nevertheless, and strode up the "Hven a fundral's better than this maloon steps and in through the open I dump teday."

"Out ter the funeral: that's what's the matter with this town. The whole kit an' caboodle gone across the creek to help plant old Dad Calkins. You remember Old Dad?"

"No, can't say I do; what was he, a gambler?"

"Kind of a tin-horn; soused most c the time but still everybody liked him; pretended ter be a blacksmith when he first come, an' put up a shack down there next the hotel. Never worked mor'n three days to my knowledge since-just naturally bummed 'round. but he was a h-l of a good story-teller, an' the boys cottoned to him. Sure, yer must have knowed him."

Shelby shook his head. "What did he die from?"

"Shot himself, I reckon. He was picked up over back o' the dance hall, with a bullet in his nut an' a gun in his hand. The girl was huntin' for him, 'cause he didn't come home, an' so Dan he went along with her. The two of 'em found him out there." "What girl?"

"Daughter, I s'pose. She's been yere kinder keepin' house ever since first knew the cuss."

"How old is she?"

"I ain't no jedge o' females' ages, if yer ask me, but maybe sixteen or seventeen. Quite a wisp of a gurl first I saw her, but she don't make up with nobody; sorter sullen-like, an' just stays ter home all the time." "Where'd you say all this rumpus

was goin' on?" "Over cross the creek, beyond that bunch o' willows. You know where the graveyard is. Goin' ter be some obsequies, you bet. Dan he went clear to Buffalo Gap for ter git a preacher ter do the thing up swell. What's the

matter with yer goin' over there, Tom, an' takin' the show in? Dan'll be be mighty pleased ter see yer horn in."

Shelby helped himself to another the big, deselated room. "I reckon

The stage agent nodded

"Yep: not so darned much to look at, either. I don't reckon I've seen her afore fer a year."

Shelby could not have described what there was about the girl to interest him even slightly. As Mike said, there was not much to look at, and what there was had been rendered particularly hideous by the ill-fitting black dress in which she was dressed. She walked well, and she held her head straight up, a bit defiantly, looking neither to right nor left as Mc-Carthy led her forward by a grasp on one arm. The corners of her mouth drooped a trifle and her hair was drawn straight back and bound in a wisp. Altogether she made a rather pathetic picture, and this somehow impressed Shelby. He watched her stop at the head of the opened casket and look down at the face of the dead man. There was no sign of a tear, no semblance of a sob, and

There Was No Sign of & Tear.

then she moved on with no change

perceptible in her face, outwardly un-

moved. To all appearances her only

desire was to have the affair ended

Shelby passed and stared do'rn at

the face in the casket, that of a man

of sixty, possibly, yet exhibiting even

which had unduly aged him. It was

rather an intelligent face, framed in

and be left alone.

ory which kept him away from Mc-Carthy's saloon during the next hour. He had lost his earlier inclination for a wild carouse in town, or any desire to renew old acquaintances at the bar. He was almost persuaded to load up in the morning, if he could find the hand he needed and drive back to Cottonwood. There was nothing in it, this getting drunk on vile whisky and blowing in all he had saved at faro. H-1, no! He needed every dollar to make the ranch pay and could not afford to be a d-n fool forever. Here is where he would quit. No doubt, he was honest enough in these intentions, yet the mood passed away so completely that before night he was again with the gang and had stowed away sufficient liquid refreshments to completely overcome any lingering recollection of any higher purpose. In this happy condition he finally wended his way across the street to the shelter of the hotel.

CHAPTER II.

Outlining a Plot.

The Occidental hotel, Hicks proprietor, was merely a place in which one could sleep and eat, if one was thoroughly acclimated to border ideas of comfort. McCarthy, having no home of his own, roomed over his saloon, but was compelled to eat the Hicks brand of cooking, and, with many apologies therefor, had, on this particular occasion, the ex-reverend from Buffalo Gap as his honored guest. Shelby saw the two when he first entered, over in the farther corner and, as there chanced to be a vacant seat beside McCarthy, he made his slightly uncertain way in that direction and succeeded in safely establishing himself on the empty bench. The room was well filled with men, most of them still discussing the important event of the afternoon, and he soon became aware that the conversation of the two next to him bore upon the same sub-Ject.

Shelby stared at the smoking, greaky mess outspread before him, prying open a soggy biscuit, and asked a question of McCarthy.

"How'd the collection come out, Mac?"

"What collection? Oh, for the gurl; bout five hundred, wa'n't it, reverend?"

"Four . ninefy-seven," said the preacher in his deep voice. "Quife an assistance for the young woman in this time of bereavement, as I am informed her father left little or no property."

"Property! Old Calkins! Well, I should say not. And what's more," in death the marks of a hard life the saloon-keeper becoming interested. "I don't see how that money's goin' ter de her much good. I was just

up she'd be a right good-looking girl, besides, she's got five hundred dollars to start with and that's more money than a lot of these gazabos ever saw in all their lives. I'll bet there's fifty men in Ponca that would jump at the chance."

"Rounders and tin-horns."

"Some of them-sure. But there would be some decent fellows among them. That's about how we figured it, McCarthy?"

The saloonkeeper nodded.

"There's quite a few of the right kind 'round Ponca, Tom, who'd be mighty glad to get a decent woman and settle down. I could name a baif dozen right now. What I ain't so sure 'bout is the gurl."

"She might object? Of course she will, and why shouldn't she. You want to know what I think of the scheme, Mac? Well, it's a fool idea and it won't work-that's what I think of it ; it's idiopic."

The Buffalo Gap man leaned forward, drawing in his paunch so as to view the speaker around McCarthy. The words of condemnation evidently cut, for his face was flushed, although he held his temper.

"That's what Mac here said at first, but now he believes it will work, and so do L" he explained gravely. "It isn't at all likely the girl will object to getting married, provided she hooks up with a man she sort of likes. The only problem is to discover the right

"And you think you can go out in this town, rope an' hog-tie any stray maverick you find on the range an' give him the brandin' iron, do

been well advertised on library shelves. And then we must remember that caves were the only homes of many people who lived in the undiscovered parts of the world thousands of years ago, and this in itself adds much historical interest to these natural tunnels under the surface of the earth.

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