

**The Lady Sheriff's Captive.**

BY W. W. HINES.

Down the one street of San Carlos came a scurry of hot alkali dust, then the sound of two revolver shots, and a couple of cowboys from the Triple X ranch went tearing by on little, undersized cayuses that could run, and were then running, like, as Monty Jacobs remarked, "a couple of scart jackrabbits."

"Red" Cutcheon was in company with his bosom friend and boon companion, "Slim Jim" Morley. With the annual roundup on the Triple X over, and with three month's pay in their pockets, the two were drinking in large drafts from the cup of pleasure afforded them by the pleasing practice of "shooting up" San Carlos. They were, or rather had been, drinking other things—many other things, but principally "mescal" whisky, which makes the brain feel like the interior of an active volcano.

Being "shot up" was an old story to San Carlos and its citizens. It was just one of those little occurrences which are none the less inevitable because slightly unpleasant. About once a month a delegation of two or more cowboys from the Triple X performed the operation, which consisted in getting very drunk and then riding up and down through San Carlos' main, and only, street, yelling at the top of their voices and firing their pistols.

But the "mescal" must have been worse than usual on this day, or else Red and Slim Jim had absorbed largely of it. Their spirits were too high to be satisfied with the harmless amusement of yelling and discharging revolvers into the air. They were "hunting trouble."

"Whoop-ee!" they yelled, as they drew rein in front of Jacob's store. "Come out, you old Jew. We want licker."

Monty came. He was no coward, and besides he knew that the only danger lay in the fact that he might accidentally stop a bullet meant for another destination.

"You arter behave yourselves better, boys," said Monty, as served the drinks they demanded, "we've got a new sheriff of Ranger county since you were here last."

"To Halifax with the sheriff of Ranger county!" said Red, "What's become of old Mike Callaghan?"

"Mike died two months ago," said Monty, "and the boys thought his widow needed the fees of the office, so what did they up and do but elect his daughter to the office. Some people said twarnt legal to elect a woman sheriff, but the boys said they didn't care two whoops in a hot climate whether 'twas legal or not. So you fellers had orter quit sich foolishness as shooting up the town."

"Whoop-ee!" said Slim Jim Morley. "Hurrah for the new sheriff! Is she pretty?"

"Well, of course, there's difference of taste about beauty," said Monty cautiously. "But most of the boys swear as how she is the prettiest girl in Ranger county."

"Here's young, you old Jew," said Red enthusiastically. "We're going 'round to call on the new sheriff. Where is she? At the court house?"

Monty had no hesitancy in answering in the affirmative, for he knew the boys would never think of harming a woman.

Yelling like wild Indians, and punctuating the yells with revolver shots, the mescal-crazed cowboys started at a gallop for the little red court house.

In front they drew rein with a final yell and a volley from their six-shooters.

Not a man was in sight. The whole town looked as though

every one was indoors and asleep.

"Whoop-ee!" Bang! Bang! "We want to see the new sheriff. Come out and arrest us sberiff! Whoop-ee!"

The door in the front of the court house was quickly opened and a young girl stepped out.

"Whoop-ee!" began Red and Slim Jim in unison. Bang! went a pistol in the hands of the girl.

Evidently the new sheriff took the duties of the office in dead earnest.

In each hand she held a heavy Colt's revolver, and she began firing deliberately, first with one and then with another. A bullet struck an adobe house on the farther side of the street, another kicked up the dust at the feet of Red's cayuse. A third stung the flank of Slim Jim's cayuse, and he started off on a gallop.

Not knowing the cause of his comrade's desertion, Red reviled him bitterly.

The sound of her own pistol shots was ringing too loudly in the sheriff's ears for her to hear this shout, but she recognized the fact that neither one of the two men had fired at her and she began to wonder in she had not done wrong in sizing them up as desperadoes. Within the court house walls she had nerved herself up to the point of believing that the duties of her office required her to go out and subdue the outlaws with their own weapons. That they would refuse to meet her on equal terms, she never dreamed.

It was galling to her pride. Both men evidently regarded the whole affair as a huge joke. Her pistols were empty and according to Hoyle, she should have stepped inside the court house door to reload. Instead, she threw the two revolvers down on the floor at her feet and began crying bitterly.

Red scratched his head thoughtfully. Tears were something he could not understand. Dismounting, he threw the bridle rein over the pony's neck and walked over to the court house.

The girl continued to cry.

"Don't cry, ma'am," said Red. "There ain't no use for crying. It certainly was ornery for that pardner of mine to run away like he did, but you showed first-rate target practice for a lady. See here, ma'am! You hit me once!"

The girl looked up to see a big, lank cowboy extending a bloody hand, and shrank back, horror-struck.

"Yes'm," said Red cheerfully, not appreciating her attitude. "went right through the hand. You see them guns of your's air too heavy for a lady. You orter had taken a rest on something. Shall I go back and let you try it over? I'll go fetch Slim Jim, too, if you want him."

"Oh, it's horrible!" said the girl, "all that blood! Are you badly hurt?"

There was anxiety in her tone and Red hastened to assure her that a bullet through the hand meant nothing. Women were certainly peculiar. Five minutes before this girl had been shooting at him with the best intentions in the world to kill him and now she was alarmed over the fact that his hand was hurt.

As he reflected on these inconsistencies, Red came to the conclusion that this daughter of old Mike Callaghan's was far and away the prettiest girl he had ever looked at.

And between her sobs the girl had come to the conclusion Red Cutcheon was a particularly fine-looking specimen of the genus cowboy. Then to think of his gallantry in standing up and letting her shoot at him, for what he considered her amusement! She had read of deeds like this in old volumes of knight errantry, but she had

never expected to meet it in real life.

"I was going to put you under arrest," she sobbed. "I was going to show people that a woman sheriff could do just as a man, and now—oh! oh! oh!"

"Don't cry, ma'am," said Red awkwardly. "I ain't got the least objection in the world to being arrested. If you'll give me a paper of some kind to old Grey Hopkins, the jailer, I'll go down right now and make him lock me up. I know he hates to have any prisoners in the jail but you bet I'll make him take me in, or get every window in his old shack shot out."

"I don't want to lock you up now," said the girl. "I'll have to resign as sheriff, for I am not capable of filling the office."

"You ain't going to do no sich a thing, ma'am" said Red cheerfully and enthusiastically. "I'm going right down now and make old man Hopkins lock me up without any papers. But first off, I am going out and arrest Slim Jim Morley."

Slim Jim meanwhile, had succeeded in stopping his cayuse when only a mile or so out of the village, and was already on his way back. He was at first somewhat averse to being arrested, but Red had the drop on him, and when the situation was explained to him, he fell enthusiastically in with Red's idea of forcing old man Hopkins to lock them up.

Three months afterward it became necessary for the citizens of Ranger county to elect a new sheriff.

"I move," said Monty, addressing the mass-meeting of the Democratic party, "that, as the present occupant of the office will no longer consent to hold it, the nomination be offered to Red Cutcheon. I may say that, although I have not been directly taken into the confidence of the parties, I have a straight hunch that the present occupant of the office will shortly become Mrs. Red Cutcheon. As for Mr. Cutcheon's fitness for the office, I can only call the attention of the citizens to the fact that he is probably the best shot in Ranger county. Eight times in the past five years he has passed my store on a galloping cayuse and, although very drunk on each occasion, he has never failed to break the two glass bottles in my window with two shots."

"I therefore propose that a vote of thanks for an unusually successful administration be tendered the outgoing tenant of the office, and that Mr. Cutcheon's nomination be made unanimous by a rising vote."

Both motions were carried without a dissenting voice.

**Performed Operation.**

Meeker Cain ran a piece of a wire screening in her right hand the first of the week and it went in so deeply that an operation was found necessary to remove the wire. Dr. E. R. Hays performed a very successful operation on the same. Miss Meeker will be able to remove the bandages in a week or ten days.

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