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CAPTURE DON PEDRO.

W HEN we went west in search of gold, we stopped at Golden Gulch and staked our claim. In a month's time we got things to running all right, and were congratulating ourselves that the west was not so "wild and woolly" as it is represented, when something happened that threw the camp into great excitement.

One night, Mr. Rogers, whose claim was next to ours, had a fine horse stolen from him. Confusion reigned! A thief in camp! Who could it be? Everybody was above suspicion, of course. Horse-stealing in the west is punished by death, but no trace of the thief could be found.

And so, a week passed. Then, one morning there arrived in camp a man dressed in a rich Mexican suit, with his sombrero pulled over his eyes and a grizzly silk handkerchief tied around his neck. He came to search for gold. We could not see him, but he had small eyes and a black mustache. He was of slight build and not tall.

He "put up" at Jerry Griffin's "hotel," which was also postoffice, bootshop and general horse-furnishing store at the Gulch, and gave his name as Don Pedro Gomez. The miners looked with suspicion on this man from the first, and when two nights later, Jack Allen was robbed of a bag of "dust," and Don Pedro "turned up missing," they were quick to denounce him as the thief.

Allen and Williams at once organized a posse of men to search the mountains for the Mexican. Father was one of the party. In vain I asked him to let me go. No, it was out of the question—I was too young and as they might be gone all day I must stay at home and watch the claim. Mother had gone to Western city to see a doctor, with a neighbor's wife the day before, so I would be alone in the cabin.

Jack Allen found what he said was a trail up the mountain, so the procession started after the thief. I was in a very bad humor when I thought what a bore it would be to stay on the claim all alone all day. I longed to have a chance to carry the new rifle that father had given me, with all a boy's eagerness to "shoot something."

The day passed slowly and I was glad when darkness came and the moon rose from behind a distant clump of bowlders. I went to the window and looked out. How still everything was! How bright the moonlight gleamed on the rocks! I began to wonder whether the men had captured Don Pedro, and how long they would be gone.

Suddenly a happy thought struck me. "I'll put on my hat and go out to muntered and running up the ladder to the left I opened my trunk and took from it the buckskin suit that I wore to the masquerade last winter, and put it on. In my belt I stuck two rusty revolvers that I found on the floor, and then descended to the room below.

"THROW UP YOUR HANDS!"

put on my father's big felt hat, stuck the biggest carving knife in my belt with the pistols, grabbed my rifle and began to parade up and down the room.

When I had kept this up for a little while, I happened to look at the door and there I beheld a man who was watching me with a smile on his face. I gave a start, in which joy and terror were equally combined, for the man was of slight build and had black eyes and a black mustache. I was sure that it was Don Pedro, although he wore the ordinary citizen's dress. I determined then and there to capture him.

Levelling my rifle at the man's head, I cried:

"Throw up your hands, stranger! Don't move, on your life!"

"Eh?" said my Don Pedro. "Why I 'Hold 'em up!" I repeated savagely, and my visitor obeyed me.

"Now walk in!" I said, still keeping him covered. "And sit down on that stool!"

"With pleasure," said my captive; "but my dear young man, are you not making a mistake? My name is Don—"

"Ah!" I cried triumphantly. "You admit it, although you are very cool about it—and I admire you for it. We western men like true grit!"

I am almost sure my captive chuckled at this.

"But wait!" I went on, delighted at the sensation I would make when the men returned. "Wait till the others get here. Don Pedro, do you see that tree out there? Watch it, for there you'll swing!"

My prisoner paled.

"Look here, young fellow," he said, still keeping his arms elevated. "You present a decidedly warlike appearance in that rifle, and your actions are decidedly unpleasant. Don't you think you had better let the joke drop?"

I was almost letting the rifle drop, for it was very heavy, but I answered that Golden Gulch miners did not consider horse-stealing a joke, and gently reminded him that the rifle was loaded.

My arms were beginning to ache. Suppose the boys should not come back that night, what should I do? Just then I heard the clatter of horses' hoofs on the hard rocky road. Nearer and nearer came the sounds, and then the whole party swept down the mountain and drew rein in front of the cabin.

"Father! Jack! Dick!" I shouted.

MR. BRYAN AGAIN.

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