

The Girl a Horse and a Dog

By FRANCIS LYNDE

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—Under his grandfather's will, Stanford Broughton, society rider, has his share of the estate, valued at something like \$100,000, lies in a "safe repository" attitude and long on the subject, and that is all. It may be identified by the presence nearby of a brown-haired, blue-eyed girl, a pinto horse and a dog with a split face, hair black and half white. Stanford at first regards the bequest as a joke, but after consideration sets out to find his legacy.

CHAPTER II.—On his way to Denver, the city nearest the meridian described in his grandfather's will, Stanford hears from a fellow traveler a story having to do with a flooded mine.

CHAPTER III.—Thinking things over, he begins to imagine there may be something in his grandfather's bequest words which, he ideas finally centering on the possibility of a mine, as a "safe repository." Recalling the narrative on the train, he ascertains that his fellow traveler was a mining engineer, Charles Bullerton. Bullerton refuses him information, but from other sources Broughton learns enough to make him proceed to Placerville, in the Red desert.

CHAPTER IV.—On the station platform at Atropia, just as the train pulls out, Stanford sees what appears to be the identical horse and dog described in his grandfather's will. Impressed, he tries to get on the train at the next stop, Atropia, where he finds that Atropia was originally Placerville, his destination. Unable to secure a conveyance at once to take him to Placerville, Broughton seizes a construction car and escapes, leaving the impression on the town marshal, Beasley, that he is slightly demented.

CHAPTER V.—Broughton abandons the car, which is wrecked, and escapes on foot in the night. He is unable to get a horse or a dog, and after a long search he finds a pinto horse and a dog with a split face, hair black and half white, which he takes to his father's mine to meet his father.

CHAPTER VI.—Broughton's horse and dog are mysteriously caretaken of the mine, and his daughter Jeanie, seeing the girl, Stanford goes to her to reveal his identity, but she refuses to do so.

CHAPTER VII.—Next morning, after a search for his horse and dog, Stanford goes to look over the machinery, and he finds a man who has become interested in the mine, and who has been working for him ever since.

CHAPTER VIII.—Broughton and Hiram get the pump working, but are unable to make an impression on the water. Bullerton, apparently an old friend of the mine, is consulted, and he suggests to drain it in consideration of Broughton's giving him fifty-one per cent of the property. Stanford refused. Bullerton offers to buy the mine outright for \$50,000. It had cost Broughton's grandfather a million. Stanford again refused.

CHAPTER IX.—Jeanie cautions Broughton against selling the mine, under any circumstances, and apparently is a friend of his. After a conversation with Daddy Hiram, Broughton decides he will stick to the property.

CHAPTER X.

The Deep-Well.

The next morning I turned out at break of day, before anybody else was up, slipped into my clothes, straightened up my bunk, and dropped through the ladder hatchway to the main-deck. I had told myself that the reason for the daybreak turn-out was a desire to see if the railroad people really had been sufficiently in earnest about the proposed copper mine branch to make a survey for it; but the true underlying push was a biting reluctance to have anything more to do with Bullerton, or even to sit at table with him. Tiptoeing through the common room, so as not to wake Daddy Hiram, I broke into Jeanie's kitchen and raided the cupboard for a bite of something to eat. There was plenty of bread, and some cold fried ham, and cutting a couple of generous sandwiches, I hiked out to make my breakfast in the open.

The sandwiches disposed of, I began to re-arrange the bench wood and back and forth, searching for some indications of the railroad survey. In due time I found one of the location stakes, and from its facing and the markings on it, got the direction of the proposed line and was able to trace it for some distance along the bench. As Daddy had said, it ran within a few hundred yards of the Clinabar claim, and a short stiffer would make his suggestion perfectly feasible; our ore could be shot into the shaft with but a single hoisting.

From tracing the railroad survey, I edged around to take another look at the possibilities of the drainage tunnel Daddy and I had dug out. Going over the ground this second time, and with some better knowledge of the difficulties, it appeared that we must have ridiculously underestimated the problem. During the summer care-fully, and guessing at the differences in altitude by the heights of the trees, I saw that it wouldn't be safe to count upon less than a mile of tunneling, and this, in the solid porphyry of Old Clinabar, and in a situation remote from the nearest base of supplies, would run—no, it wouldn't run; it would fairly gallop into money.

Was this what Bullerton meant to do if he could out me? That he was utterly confident of his ability to drain the Clinabar was evident. But how was it to be done? Would he, or his backers, be willing to spend a quarter of a million or more, and the better part of a year's time, driving that mile-long tunnel?

The longer I thought about it, the larger the conviction grew that no such expensive expedient was to be resorted to. Bullerton, or his backers, or both, knew some other and far cheaper and more expeditious way of getting rid of the water. Sitting on a big rock that had in some former earth convulsion tumbled from the broken cliffs above the mine, I gave the mechanical fraction of my brain (it was a small fraction and sadly under-developed) free rein.

Two possibilities suggested themselves. A siphon, a big pipe, starting at the bottom of the shaft and leading out over the top and down the mountain to a point lower than the shaft-bottom, would, after it was once started, automatically discharge a stream of its own bigness, whatever that should be. But the cost of over a mile of such pipe was beyond my means; and if two six-inch pumps driven night and day had failed to make any impression upon the flood, what could be expected of a siphon which, in the nature of things, couldn't be much bigger than an ordinary water main?

The other possibility was even less hopeful. It was the driving of a short tunnel, which Daddy and I might undertake without additional help, from the level of the high bench straight in to an intersection with the mine shaft. This, I estimated, might tap the water at a point possibly twenty feet below its present level in the shaft. Its success, as I saw at once, would depend entirely upon the location and volume of the underground lake which was supposed to be supplying the flood. If this reservoir were shallow and high in the mountain, the short tunnel might drain it. If it were deep and low, nothing would be accomplished.

The question was still hanging hopelessly up in the air when I made my way around to the mine buildings by the left-hand gulch path, sneaked in and began to chuck myself into Daddy's extra pair of overalls; just for what, I hadn't the least idea; only I needed to be doing something to keep me from going completely dotty in the guessing contest.

By this time, as I knew, they would be getting up from breakfast in the cabin across the dump-head, which would most likely be Bullerton's cue to come over and ride me some more. When I looked out in sour anticipation, here he came, smoking one of his high-priced cigars and swaggering a bit, as he always did in walking.

"This is your thirty-thousand-dollar day, Broughton. He tossed at me as soon as he stepped over the threshold of the shaft house door, but I fancied I could nudge that, some way, he didn't seem quite so chipper and careless as he had the day before.

"See here," I ripped out; "what's the deal? You want my mine, but you won't pay a cent for it. It's not in the market and it isn't going to be. Not in a thousand years!"

"But see here; what's the use of butting your head against a stone wall? You're stuck, world without end, and you know it. This flooded hole in the ground is of no more use to you than a pair of spectacles to a blind man!"

"Perhaps not; 'tis a poor thing, but mine own. I guess I can keep it as a souvenir if I feel like it, can't I?"

"Oh, h—!" he grunted, and turning on his heel went away.

It was along about nine o'clock when I got the deep-wells ready to run and freshened up the fires and turned the steam on. In curious contrast to the care which had been taken to provide a discharge-outlet for the centrifugals, the Cornish pumps had merely an iron trough which ran to a ditch leading down to the bench below the mine-mornings. After a few minutes of clanking and banging, the water began to come. It was horribly smelling stuff, thick and discolored; evidences sufficient that it was coming from the bottom of the mine. The two pumps together were lifting about an eight-inch stream, and it occurred to me at once that if I could get the centrifugals going at the same time, the mass attack might accomplish what the piece-meal assault couldn't.

Throwing in the cloth that drove the big rotaries, I ran up against what Daddy would have called a "circumstance." There wasn't power enough to drive both sets of pumps coupled in together; at least, not with the steam pressure the boilers were carrying. Thinking to get more power by pushing the fires a bit harder, I went to the detached boiler room to stoke up, leaving the deep wells clanging away in the shaft-house. I had fired two of the furnaces and was at work on the third when a series of grinding crashes in the machinery sent me flying to find out what was going wrong.

What was happening—what had already happened—was a plenty. As I have said, the great Cornish water-lifters were driven through a train of gearing. When I reached the scene, the steam engine was still running smoothly; but the pumps had stopped. The reason didn't have to be looked for with a microscope. The gear-train smashed into bits, and half of the cogs stripped from its mesh-mate, if that's what you'd call it.

Mechanically I stopped the engine and went to view the remains. The deep-wells were done for—there was no question about that; they'd never run again until a new set of gears should be installed. That much determined, I began to look for the cause of the calamity. Naturally, I supposed that a "cracked cog" in one of the wheels had given way, and with this for a starting-point, the general smash would follow as a matter of course. But careful and even painful scrutiny of the wreckage failed to reveal the cog or the ancient fracture. Each break was new and fresh and clean; there wasn't a sign of an old flaw in any one of them.

I think I must have knelt there under the gear-train for a half-hour or more, handling the fragments of iron and fitting them together. It was like a child's broken-block puzzle, and after a time I was able to lay all the larger bits out upon the floor in their proper relation to one another. It was in the ground-up debris remaining that I found something which suddenly made me see red. Battered into shapelessness, but still clearly recognizable, were the crushed disjecta membra of our twelve-inch monkey-wrench!

I tried not to go off the handle in a fit of mad rage. With a sort of forced calm I considered every beam and projecting timber where I might incautiously have left the wrench; and from which it might have jarred off to fall into the gears. There was no such chance. I had used the wrench in re-assembling the machinery, but now that I came to recall all the circumstances, I distinctly remembered having put it, together with the other tools, on the little work bench back of the engine. The alternative conclusion was, therefore, fairly inevitable. While I was firing the furnaces, somebody—and doubtless somebody who had been watching for the opportunity—had taken advantage of the moment when my back was turned and had thrown the wrench into the gears.

It was the final straw. There was only one person on the Clinabar reservation who could have any motive for wrecking my machinery; and while I was banking the fires and setting things in order for the night I chanted my course, as the navigators say, the dawn of another day. I told myself, would schedule the ultimate limit. Unless he should prove to be a good bit quicker with his gun than I was with my fists, Bullerton was due to get the man-handling's seemed to be getting far and beyond that, he'd quit the Clinabar. If I should have to tie him on his horse and dog the best half-way to Atropia.

It was with this most unchristian design seething and boiling in my brain that I finally went over to the cabin, let myself in, and climbed stealthily up the loft ladder to my blankets, and the next thing I knew, it was broad daylight, the sun was shining in at the little window over the head of my bunk, and from the kitchen at the rear a juicy and most appetizing odor of frying ham was wafting itself up through the cracks in the unthinkingly walls of my cubicle.

CHAPTER XI.

An Arctic Bath. It's an old saying that coming events have a knack of foreshadowing themselves. While I was struggling into my clothes and reviving that overnight determination to have it out with Bullerton, the minute I should lay eyes upon him, it struck me all at once that the house was curiously quiet. To be sure, somebody was stirring and the breakfast was cooking, but the premonition that something had happened was strong upon me when I descended the ladder.

In the living room I found a mighty

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sober-faced old Daddy putting breakfast on the table. "It's just you and me for it, this mornin', Stannie," he muttered, laying plates for two; and his mild old eyes looked as if they were about to take a bath.

"What?" I exclaimed. "Has Bullerton gone?"

"Uh-huh; bright and early—fore day I reckon, leastwise, I didn't hear him when he went."

"But where's Jeanie? She isn't sick, is she?"

"He shook his head dolefully. "No, she—she's gone, too."

"Not with Bullerton?" I gasped. "It sure does look that-away, Stannie. She left a 'H' note on the table

"No, She's Gone, Too." for me, a-tellin' me not to worry none, and sayin'—I needn't look for her till I saw her agin'."

"At first I could hardly believe my own ears. It was so incredibly out of keeping with Jeanie—so I had been idealizing her.

"Are you going after them?" I demanded.

"What for?" was the despondent query. "Tain't a morsel o' use, any way you look at it. Jeanie's worn an growned, and she don't have to wear the 'old daddy' say she can, 'r she musn't. Besides, they was probably pitchin' out to catch one o' the early trains—there's one each way, east and west—and them trains 've been gone a couple o' hours."

Daddy had done his best with the breakfast, but I don't recall any meal of my life that ever came so near choking me. I told Daddy about the smashing of the machinery, and the proof I had that it had been a piece of sabotage.

"Reckon maybe he allowed you'd find out he done it and try a dogfall 'r somethin' with him to pay him back," Daddy queried.

"I don't know," I confessed. I went on eating in silence, or rather trying to eat, and turning over the puzzling and bad-tasting questionings in my mind. How could Jeanie go off with Bullerton, knowing him to be the scamp he was? And why, if she had been meaning all along to do this thing, had she blocked his game by telling me that I wasn't to sell him the Clinabar?

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