

There was, of course, just the pos-

ability that they intended to murder

him, but Holt could not associate Self-

ridge with anything so lawless. The

man was too soft of fiber to carry

through such a program, and as yet

there was need of nothing so drastic.

No, this kidneping expedition would

not run to murder. He would be set

free in a few weeks, and if he told the

true story of where he had been his

foes would spread the report that be

was insane in his batred of Macdonald

and imagined all sorts of persecutions.

They followed Wild Goose creek all

bext day, getting always closer to its

headwaters near the divide. On the

biped. Big Bill snatched up a rifle and

"What was that?" asked George.

Again faintly from some far corner

The men looked at one another and

"Think we better break camp and

'No. We're in a little draw here-

as good a hiding place as we'd be like-

A Man Staggered Drunkenly Into View.

Dutt had been busy stamping out

"Modeline you had better got the camp

his hoped for rescuers would appear.

"Get him grub, pronto."

The old mun rose and moved toward

the suffering man. "Come, pard. Tha's

U right. Bit down right here and

be man to a place beside Big Bill

and made him sit down. "Better light

fire, boys, and get some coffee on

"Now tell us

to it, as the old sayin' is." He led

the campfire while Holway was driv-

brush, George. Well sit tight.

Ang the horses into the brush

Crncker.

drift?" asked Dud.

"I just got a notion mebbe you might be looking for one, Mr. Pelfrich. Like as not you ain't fixing up for this Gordon Elliot n-tnll."

Wally had no come-back, unless it was one to retort in ironic admiration. "You're a wonder, Holt. Pity you don't start a detective bureau."

The old man went away cackling. If Selfridge had beld any doubts before, he discarded them now. Holt would wreck the whole enterprise, were be given a chance. It would never do to let Elliot meet and talk with him. He knew too much, and he was eager

to tell all he knew. Macdonald's lieutenant got busy at third day they crossed to the other once with plans to abduct Holt. "We'll side of the ridge and descended into send the old man off on a prospecting a little mountain park. trip with some of the boys," explained Setfridge to Howland. "That way we'll The country was so much a primeval kill two birds. He's back on his as wilderness that a big buil moose sessment work. The time limit will be stalked almost upon their camp before up before he returns and we'll start a discovering the presence of a strange contest for the claim."

Howland made no comment. He was took a shot which sent the intruder an engineer and not a politician. In scampering. his position it was impossible for him From somewhere in the distance not to know that a good deal about came a faint sound. the legal status of the Macdonald a firm believer in a wide-open Alaska. an echo," returned Dud. in the use of the territory by those "Came too late for an echo." Big Bill who had settled it.

"Better arrange it with Big Bill, then, but don't tell me anything about of the basin the sound drifted. It was it. I don't was to know the details," like the pop of a scarcely heard firehe told Selfridge.

Big Bill Macy accepted the job with a grin. He had never liked old Holt, at their prisoner. anyhow. Besides, they were not going to do him any harm.

Holt was baking a match of sourdough bread that evening when there came a knock at the cabin door. At eight of Big Bill and his two companions the prospector closed the oven and straightened with alert suspicion He was not on visiting terms with any of these men. Why had they come to

see him? "We're going prospecting up Wild Goose creek, and we want you to go along. Gid." explained Macy. "You're an old sour-dough miner, and we all agree we'd like to have you throw in with us. What say?"

The old miner's answer was direct but not flattering. "What do I want to go on a wild-goose mush with a bunch of bums for?" he shrilled. Bill Macy scratched his book none

and looked reproachfully at his bost. At least Holt thought he was looking at him. One could not be sure, for Bill's eyes did not exactly track. "What's the use of snapping at me

the a turtle? Durgen says Wild Goose

"Let it stay there, then. I ain't going. That's flat," Holt turned to

adjust the damper of his stove. "Oh. I don't know. I wouldn't say that," drawled Bill insolenfly.

The man at the stove caught the change in tone and turned quickly. He was too late. Macy had thrown him nelf forward and the weight of his body flung Holt against the wall. fore the miner could recover, the two men were upon him. They him to the floor and in spitstruggles tied him hand and foot

Big Bill rose and looked sown der sively at his prisoner. "Better change your mind and go with us. Holt pend a quiet month up at the headunriers of Wild Goose. Say you'll ome along."

"What are you going to do with me?" demanded Holt.

"I recken you need a church to fall n you before you can take a hint. Oldn't I mention Wild Goose creek three or four times?' jeered his captor. Holt made no further protest. He Tas furious, but at present quite helpess. However it went against the grain, he might as well give in until reellion would do some good.

Ten minutes later the party was noving stiently along the trail that led to the hills. The pack borse went whisper to Dad. arst, in charge of George Holway. The prisoner walked next, his hands tied behind him. Big Bill followed, and the man he had called Dud brought up the rear.

Macy had released the hands of his prisoner so that he might have a ghance to fight the mosquitoes, but he tept a wary eye upon him and never et him move more than a few feet from him. The trail grew steeper as it peared the head of the canyon till at ast it climbed the left wall and merged from the guich to an uneven

The leader of the party looked at his watch. "Past midnight. We'll ramp here, George, and see if we can't get rid of the 'skeeters."

Don't give him too much solid grub They built smudge fires of green wood and on the lee side of these an-The famished man ate what was other one of dry sticks. Dud made given him and clamored for more. coffee upon this and cooked bacon While George chopped wood for th told him soothingly. fires and boughs of small fire for bed how come you to get lost." ding. Big Bill sat with a rifle across The man nedded gravely. "Hit that his knees just back of the prisoner. line low, Gord. Hit 'er low.

"Gid's a shifty old cuss, and I sin't three yards to gain." chances," he expinined

sloud to Dud. Hoit was beginning to take the out rage philosophically. He slept peacefully while they took turns watching

North, a chechako.

Oldeon Holt's sly brain moved ke by to the possibility that he could put se more than a possibility, as even probability, at least as a fifty-fifty chance. A sardonic gr's hovered about the corners of his grim mouth. would be a strange freak of irony if Wally Selfridge, to prevent a meeting between him and the government land would never have taken place.

CHAPTER IX.

The Rah-Rah Boy Functions. Big Bill grumbled a good deal at the addition to the party. It would be decidedly awkward if this stranger should become rational and under stand the status of the camp be had joined. The word of old Holt alone might be negligible, but supported by that of a disinterested party it would be a very different matter. Still, there was no help for it. They would have to take care of the man until he was able to travel. At the worst, Big Bill

could give him a letter to Selfridge

explaining things and so pass the buck to that gentleman. Gid Holt had, with the tacit consent of his guards, appointed himself as a port of nurse to the stranger. Early In the evening the sick man fell into "Sounded like a shot Mebbe it was a sound sleep, from which he did not wake until morning. George was away looking after the packhornes, Dud was cooking breakfast, and Big Bill, his rifle close at hand, was chopping young fire fifty feet back of the camp. The cook also had a gun, loaded with buckshot, lying on a box beside him, so that they were taking no

> chances with their prisoner. The old miner turned from rearranging the boughs of green fir on the emudge to see that his patient was hwake and his mind normal. quiet, steady eyes resting upon him told him that the delirium had passed "Fretty nearly all in, wasn't I?" the

roung man said. "Yep. Seven—eleven—fifteen Take 'er cony, old man," he said in his shrill, high voice as he moved toward the man in the blankets. Then, in a low tone, while he pretended to arrange the bedding over the stranger. he asked a quick question.

"Are you Ellist?" "Don't tell them. Talk football lingo as if you was still out of your hald." Holt turned and enlied to Dud. Plays he wants some breakfast."

"On the way." the cook answered. Holt seemed to be scothing the delirious man. What he really said was so as to keep me from telling you the truth. Put! Tune up now."

lieve in taking unnecessary chances

(ae of the men swore softly. The gimlet eyes of the old miner fastened on the spot where in another moment A man staggered drunkenly into ylew. He rected halfway across the mouth of the draw and stopped His camp. He stared, as if doubtful whether they had played him false, then lurched toward the waiting group. "Lost and all in." Holway said in a The other man nodded. Neither of them made a move toward the htrange: who stopped in front of their camp and looked with glazed eyes from one to another. His face was fraws and haggard and lined. Extreme exhaustion showed in every movement. He babbled incoherently. "Don't you see he's starving and out of his head?" snapped Holt brusquely.

die Strong Fingers Closed on the Gul let of the Man.

Come through with a square meal, you four-flusher." demanded Elliot merulous voice. He turned to Macy. Look here, Cap. Haven't I played the game all fall? Don't I get what want now we're through?"

The voice of the young man was exsited. His eyes had lost their quiet steadiness and roved restlessly to and tro. If Big Bill had held any doubtsone glance dissipated them.

"Sure you do. Hustle over and help Oud with the breakfast, Holt. I'll look out for our friend."

Elliot and Holt found no more chance to talk together that morning Sometimes the young government Scial lay staring straight in front of Hometimes be appeared to dose again be would talk in the disjointed

angler with a grin

He turned in at two after he ad roused Dud to take his place. The deeping beside him, to make sure that be was ready. The old man answered the kick with another.

Presently Oprdon got up, yawned and strolled toward the edge of the

"Don't go and get lost, young fellow," cautioned Dud. Gordon, on his way back, passed be

hind the guard, who was sitting tailor fashion before a smudge with a mule; shotgun across his knees. "This ain't no country for checha

a keeper," the cook continued. "Looks like your folks would have better lar interested Gordon. sense than to let their rab-rab boy--He got no farther. Elliot dropped to

one knee and his strong ingers closed on the guilet of the man so tightly that ot even a group could escape him The old miner, waiting with every nuscle ready and every nerve under tension. Sung saide his blanket and suried himself at the guard. It took him less time than it takes to tell to wrest the gun from the cook.

He got to his feet just as Big Bill als eyes and brain still fogged with ticep, sat up and began to take notice of the disturbance.

"Don't move," warned Holt sharply Better throw your hands up. No monkey business, do you bear? I'd as lief blow a hole through you as not. Big Bill turned bitterly to Elliot "So you were faking all the time young fellow. We save your life and you round on us. You're a pretty slick proposition as a double-crosser."

"And that ain't alt," chirped up Holt blithely. "Let me introduce our friend to you. Mr. Big Bill Macy. This is to look over the Kamatiah cinima. Seifridge gave you lads this penitentiary job so as I wouldn't meet Elliot when he reached the camp. I he hadn't been so darned anxious about it, our young friend would have died here on the divide. But Mr. Seifridge kindly outfitted a party and sent us a hundred miles into the hills to rescue the perishing, as the old sayin' goes. Consequence is, Elliot and me The answer of Gid Holt was an odd meet up and have that nice confiden- Farrell held down the claim. Mac had tial talk after all. The ways of Prov. a jug of become with him. He got Faridence is strange, as you might say, rell tanked up. You know Mac-bow

Mr. Macy. "Your trick," conceded Big Bill outlenly. "Now what are you going to

do with us?" "Not a thing-coing to leave you right here to prospect Wild Goose creek answered Holt blandly. "Purden says there's gold up here-bears

full Macy condemned Durden in langrange profune and energetic. He didn't stop at Durden. Helt came for a share of it, also killiot and Self

Hig Hill had put down his ax and awhile. He's had persuading enough don't you reckon? I'll sit here and corter keep the boys company while you cut the pack-ropes and bring 'em "I tell you I'm out of training here. But first I'd step in and unload all the hardware they're packing. ros don't one of them is likely to get anxious. I'd hate to see any of them friends here to say. Don't be look nat-

> and cut them into suitable lengths. doit's monotogue rambied on. He was carrulous and affable. Not for a long me had he enjoyed himself so much. Gordon tied the hands of Big Bill chind him, then roped his feet together, after which he did the same for Solway. The old miner superintended the job and was not satisfied till be and added a few extra knots on his

Elliot brought back the pack-ropes

aral " "

own behalf. shouldn't wonder. Now if you'll just cover friend chef with this sawed-off Elliot, I'll threw the diamond hitch over what supplies we'll need to get back to Kamatiah. I'll take one bronch and leave the other to the convicts," said Holt cheerfully.

"Forget that convict stuff," growled Macy. "With Macdonald back of you'll have a hectic time getting any

"That might be true if these folks were back of you. But are they? Course I ain't any Sherlock Holmes. but it don't look to me like they'd play any such fool system as this."

After Holt had packed one of the animals be turned to Elliot. "I reckup we're rendy."

Under orders from Elliot Dud fixed up the smudges and arranged the mosquite netting over the bound men so as to give them all the protection pos-"We're going to take Dud with us

for a part of the trip. We'll send him back to you later in the day. You'll have to fast till He gets back, but outside of that you'll do very well if you don't roll around trying to get loose, Do that, and you'll jar loose the mosquito petting. You know what that means," explained Gordon.

come pokin' their noses into camp. But rose at the man.

The last words they heard from Big as they moved down the draw recken." It was three e'clock in the morning by the watch when they started. About

they throw of fur breakfast.

(Continued Next Week)

We have both rifles and have left them he to leave two bound men alone so wild a district for any great time. to, we'll start Dud on the back trail. That grissly you promised Big Bill might really turn up."

The two men struck the headwaters of Wild Goog creek about noon and followed the stream down. They travoled steadily without haste. So long as they kept a good lookout there was nothing to be feared from the meg they had left behind. They had both long start and the advantage of

weapons. If Eillot had advertised for a year he could not have found a man who knew more of Colby Macdonald's past than Gideon Holt. The old man had worked a claim on Frenchman creek with him and had by sharp practiceso at least he had come to believebeen lawed out of his rights by the shrewd Scotsman. For seventeen years he had nursed a grudge against Mactoes to be wandering around without donald, and he was never tired of talking about him. One story in particu-

"There was Farrell O'Netll. He was . a good fellow, Farrell was, but he had just one weakness. There was times when he liked the bottle too well. He'd let it alone for months and then just iap the stuff up. It was the time of the stampede to Bonanza creek. Well, the news of the strike on Bonanza reached I nwson and we all burnt up the trail to get to the new ground first. O'Neill was one of the first. He got in about twenty below Discovery. if I remember. Mac wasn't in I'm ween. but he got there pext mo'nin' and heard the news. He lit out for Bo-Banza pronto."

The old miner stopped, took a chew of tobacco, and looked down into the valley far below where Kamatiah could just be seen, a little huddle of

"Weil?" asked Elliot. It was occamonally necessary to prompt Holt when he paused for his dramatic ef-

"Mac drops to and joins O'Neill at night. They knew each other, y' understand, so o' course it was natural Mac would put up at his camp. O'Neill had a partner and they had located together. Fellow named Strong."

"Not Hanford Strong a little heavyset man account bere around fifts ?" "You've tagged the right

"I've met him." "Well I never beard anything agnitive Han Strong. Anymay he was off that might packing grub up while

the can post it across when he's a mired to He's a forceful devil and he are be a mighty billiole one. But when he in friendliest you want to watch out he don't ally an unpervist at you that'll part you out of big. He done that to Parrell and done it a plenty."

"O Tietil got mellowed up till be hought Mac was his best friend. He was ready to eat out of his hand. So Mac works him up to sign a contractbefore witnesses too; trust Mac for hat-exchanging his half interest in "It was nothing better than rob-

"Call it what you want to. Anybow "t s" z. O'Neill kicked, and that's all the ; od it did him. He consulted lawyers at Imween. Finally he get so liscouraged that he plumb went to pieces-got on a long bat and stayed there till his money ran out. Then one bitter night he starts up to Honanza to have it out with Mac. The mercury was so low it had run into the ground a foot. Farrell slept in . deserted cabin without a fire and not enough bedding. He caught pneumony. By the time he reached the cinim he was a mighty sick man. Next week he died. That's all Mac done to O'Neill. Not a thing that wasn't



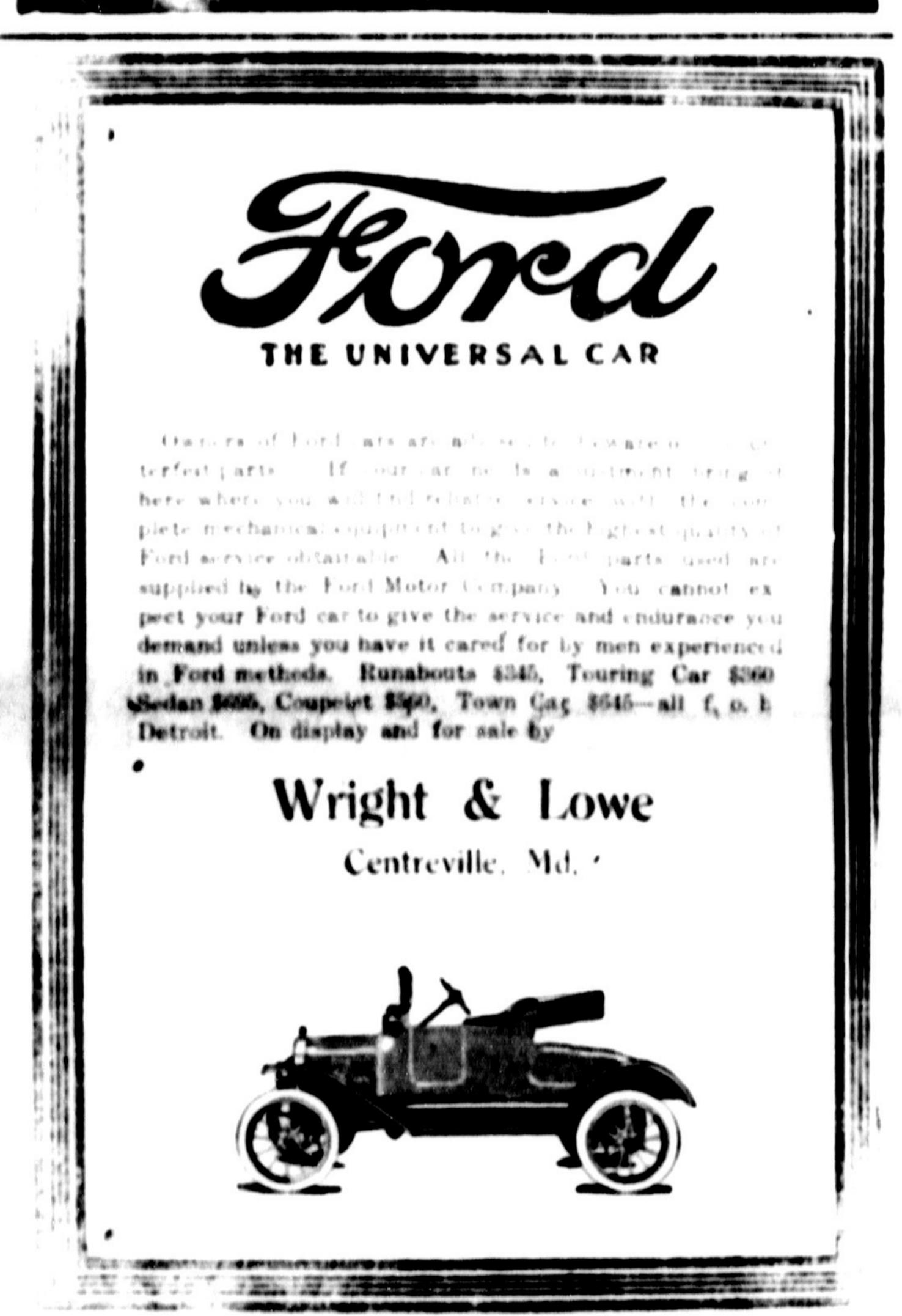
Gordon thought of Sheba O'Neill as she sat listening to the tales of Macsin't likely any grizziles, will donald in Diane's parior and his gorge

"But Mac had fell on his feet all start off that claim. Now he's a millionaire two or three times over. I

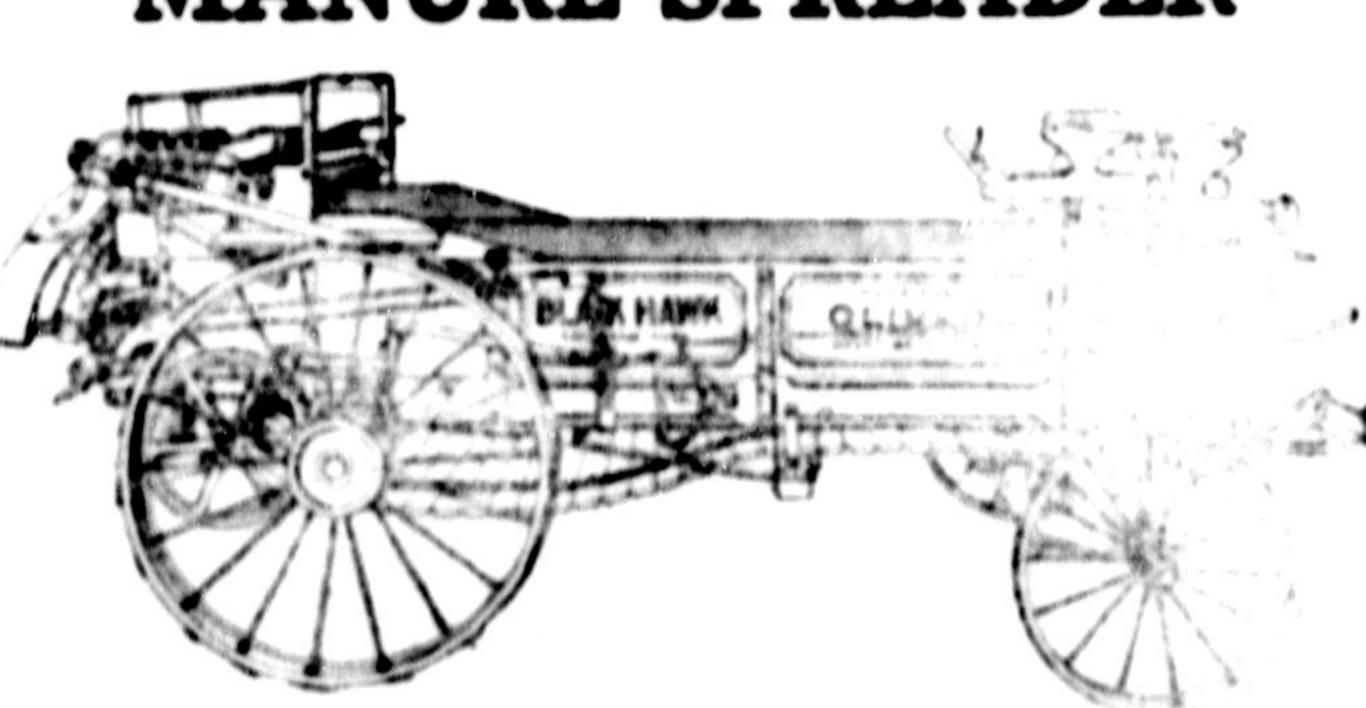
They reached the outskirts of Kanatiah about noon of the third day Gordon left Holt at his cabin after look the ground over. He met Selfman was effusive in his greeting.

The food supply of Germany is to be mished by a supply of disserists bear meat.





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