



***ALFRED HENRY
LEWIS***

***FARO NELL
AND HER
FRIENDS:
WOLFVILLE
STORIES***

The background of the book cover is a photograph of a large, reddish-brown rock formation under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. Some green foliage is visible on the left side.

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Alfred Henry Lewis

Faro Nell and Her Friends: Wolfville Stories

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SPELLING BOOK BEN

I

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DEAD SHOT BAKER

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"Which you never knows Dead Shot Baker?"

This, from the old cattleman, with a questioning glance my way.

"No? Well, you shore misses knowin' a man! Still, it ain't none so strange neither; even Wolfville's acquaintance with Dead Shot's only what you-all might call casyooal, him not personally lastin' more'n three months.

"This yere Dead Shot has a wife. Thar's women you don't want to see until you're tired, an' women you don't want to see until you're rested, an' women you don't want to see no how--don't want to see at all. This wife of Dead Shot's belongs with the latter bunch.

"Last evenin' I'm readin' whar one of them 8 philosophic sports asserts that women, that a-way, is shore the sublimation of the oncertain. That's how he lays it down; an' he never hedges the bluff for so much as a single chip. He insists that you can't put a bet on women; that you can bet on hosses or kyards or 'lections, but not on women--women bein' too plumb oncertain. As I reads along, I can't he'p feelin' that somehow this philosophic party must have knowed Dead Shot's wife.

"The first time we-all ever sees Dead Shot, he comes trackin' into the Red Light one evenin' jest after the stage rolls up. Bein' it's encroachin' on second drink time, he

sidles up to the bar; an' then, his manner some diffident an' apol'getic, he says:

"'Gents, do you-all feel like a little lick, that a-way?'

"It bein' imp'lite to reefuse, we assembles within strikin' distance of the bottles Black Jack is slammin' the len'th of the counter, an' begins spillin' out our forty drops. At this he turns even more apol'getic.

"'Which I trusts,' he says, 'that no one'll mind much if I takes water?'

"Of course no one minds. Wolfville don't 9 make no speshulty of forcin' whiskey onto no gent who's disinclined. If they prefers water, we encourages 'em.

"'An' for this yere reason,' expounds Boggs, once when he ondertakes to explain the public attitooode towards water to some inquiren' tenderfoot--'an' for this partic'lar reason: Arizona is a dry an' arid clime; an' water drinkers bein' a cur'ous rarity, we admires to keep a spec'men or two buck-jumpin' about, so's to study their habits.'

"As we picks up our glasses, Dead Shot sets to introdoocin' himse'f.

"'My name, gents,' he says, 'is Baker, Abner Baker. The Wells-Fargo folks sends me down yere from Santa Fe to ride shotgun for 'em.'

"The name's plenty s'fficient. It's him who goes to a showdown with them three road agents who lays for the stage over in a spur of the Black Range back of San Marcial, an' hives the three. That battle saves the company \$200,000; an', they're that pleased with Dead Shot's industry, they skins the company's bankroll for a bundle of

money the size of a roll of blankets, an' gives it to him by way 10 of reward. It's the talk of the two territories.

"While we-all knows Dead Shot when he speaks his name, none of us lets on. It's ag'inst ettiquette in the southwest to know more of a gent than what he tells himse'f.

""So water's all you samples?' puts in Texas Thompson, as we stands an' drinks.

""It's like this,' explains Dead Shot, appealin' round with his eye. 'You see I can't drink nosepaint none, an' drink successful.'

""Shore,' observes Faro Nell, who's takin' her diminyootive toddy right at Dead Shot's elbow; 'thar's gents so organized that to go givin' 'em licker is like tryin' to play a harp with a hammer.'

"That's me,' exclaims Dead Shot; 'that's me, Miss, every time. Give me a spoonful, an' I deemands a bar'l. After which, thar ain't no se'f respectin' camp that'll stand for my game.'

""I savvys what you means,' says Tutt; 'I reecalls in my own case how, on the hocks of mebbby it's the ninth drink--which this is years an' years ago, though--I mistakes a dem'crat primary for a Methodist praise meetin', an' comes ramblin' in an' offers to lead in pra'r. Which I carries the scars to this day.'

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""Which is why, Dave,' interjecks Cherokee Hall, in hopes of settin' Tutt to pitchin' on his p'litical rope, him bein' by nacher a oncompromisin' reepublican that a-way--'which is why you always holds dem'crats so low.'

""But I don't hold 'em low,' protests Tutt. 'Thar's heaps to be said for dem'crats, leastwise for the sort that's pesterin' 'round in the country I hails from.'

""What be your dem'crats like, Dave?' Texas urges. 'Which I wants to see if they're same as the kind I cuts the trail of down about Laredo.'

""Well,' returns Tutt, 'simply hittin' the high places, them dem'crats by which I'm born surrounded chews tobacco, sw'ars profoosely, drinks mighty exhaustive, hates niggers, an' some of 'em can read.'

""That deescription goes for Laredo, too,' Texas allows. 'This yere jedge, who gives my wife her divorce that time, an' sets the sheriff to sellin' up my steers for costs an' al'mony, is a dem'crat. What you says, Dave, is the merest picture of that joorist.'

""I expects my wife'll come rackin' along 12 *poco tiempo*,' Dead Shot remarks, after a pause. 'I'm yere as advance gyard to sling things into shape.'

""It's as good as a toone of music to see how softly his face lights up. He's as big an' wide an' thick an' strong as Boggs, an' yet it's plain as paint that this yere wife of his, whoever she is, can jest nacherally make curl-papers of him.

""That mention of a wife as usual sets Texas to growlin'.

""Thar you be, Dan!' I overhears him whisper, same as if he's been ill-treated; 'the instant this Dead-Shot says "Water" I'm onto it that he's a married man. Water an' matrimony goes hand in hand.'

""Now I don't see why none?' retorts Boggs.

""Because water's weakenin'. Feed a sport on water, an' it's a cinch he falls a prey to the first female who ropes at

him.'

"'Thar's Dave,' Boggs argyoos, noddin' towards Tutt. 'Ain't he drinkin' that time he weds Tucson Jennie?'

"'Dave's the exception. Also, you-all remembers them circumstances, Dan. Dave 13 don't marry Jennie; Jennie simply ups an' has him.'

"'All the same,' contends Boggs, 'I don't regyard Dead Shot's sobriety as no drawback. Thar's lots of folks who's cap'ble of bein' sober an' sociable at one an' the same time.'

"These yere low-voiced wranglin's between Texas an' Boggs is off to one side. Meanwhile, the gen'ral confab proceeds.

"'You ain't been long hooked up?' says Doc Peets, addressin' Dead Shot.

"'About a year. She's in the stage that time I has the trouble with them hold-ups in the Black Range, an' she allows she likes my style.'

"'We-all hears about that Black Range battle,' remarks Enright.

"'It's a mighty lucky play for me,' says Dead Shot; 'I don't ree'lize it while I'm workin' my winchester, but I'm winnin' a angel all the time. That's on the level, gents! I never puts my arm 'round her yet, but what I go feelin' for wings.'

"'Don't this make you sick?' Texas growls to Boggs.

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"'No, it don't,' Boggs replies. 'On the contrary, I'm teched.'

"'Gents,' goes on Dead Shot, an' I sees his mustache tremble that a-way; 'I don't mind confessin' she's that angelic I'm half afraid to marry her. I ain't fine enough! It's like weddin' gunny-sack to silk--me makin' her my wife.

Which I shore has to think an' argyoo with myse'f a whole lot, before I gets the courage. Ain't you-all ever noticed'-- yere he appeals 'round to Peets--'that every time you meets up with a angel, thar's always some smoke-begrimed an' sin-encrusted son of Satan workin' double-turn to support her?'

"Peets nods.

"'Shore! Well, it's sech reflections which final gives me the reequired sand. An' so, one evenin' up in Albuquerque, we prances over before a padre an' we're married. You bet, it's like a vision.'

"'Any papooses?' asks Tutt, plumb pompous.

"'None as yet,' confesses Dead Shot, lookin' abashed.

"'Which I've nacherally got one,' an' yere 15 Tutt swells. 'You can put your case *peso* on it he's the real thing, too.'

"'Little Enright Peets is certainly a fine child,' remarks Nell. 'Dave, you're shore licensed to be proud of him.'

"'That's whatever,' adds Boggs. 'Little Enright Peets is nothin' short of bein' the No'th Star of all hoomanity!'

"Mebby a week passes, an' one mornin' Dead Shot goes squanderin' over to Tucson to bring his wife. An' nacherally we're on what they calls in St. Looley the 'quee vee' to see her. At that, we-all don't crowd 'round permiscus when the stage arrives, an' we avoids everything which borders on mob voylence.

"Dead Shot hits the street, lookin' that happy it's like he's in a dream, an' then goes feelin' about, soft an' solic'tous, inside. At last he lifts her out, an' stands thar holdin' her in his arms. She's shore beautiful; only she ain't no bigger 'n a ten year old youngone. Yellow-ha'red an' bloo-eyed, she

makes you think of these yere china ornaments that's regyarded artistic by the Dutch.

"They're certainly a contrast--him big as a house, her as small an' pretty as a doll! An' 16 you should see that enamored Dead Shot look at her!--long an' deep, like a man drinkin'! Son, sometimes I fears women, that a-way, misses all knowledge of how much they're loved.

"'She ain't sick,' says Dead Shot, speakin' gen'ral; 'only she twists her off ankle gettin' out at the last station.'

"Dead Shot heads for the little 'dobe he's fitted up, packin' his bloo-eyed doll in his arms. What's our impressions? No gent who signs the books as sech'll say anything ag'in a lady; but between us, thar's a sooperior wrinklin' of the little tipped-up nose, an' a cold feel to them bloo eyes, which don't leave us plumb enthoosiastic.

"'It's like this,' volunteers Enright, who stacks in to explain things. 'Every gent's got his ideal; an' this yere wife of his is Dead Shot's ideal.'

"'Whatever's an ideal, Doc?' asks Boggs, who's always romancin' about for information.

"'Which an ideal, Dan,' Peets replies, 'is the partic'lar gold brick you're tryin' to buy.'

"At the time Dead Shot's standin' thar with his fam'ly in his arms, Nell comes out on 17 the Red Light steps to take a peek. Also, Missis Rucker an' Tucson Jennie is hoverin' about all sim'lar. After Dead Shot an' his bride has faded into their 'dobe, them three experts holds a energetic consultation in the street. Of course, none of us has the hardihood to go j'inin' in their deelib'rations, but from what's said later we gets a slant at their concloosions.

""Dead Shot's a mighty sight too good for her,' is how Missis Rucker gives judgment. 'It's peltin' pigs with pearls for him to go lovin' her like he does.'

"Shore; bein' ladies that-a-way, Missis Rucker, Tucson Jennie an' Faro Nell all visits Dead Shot's wife. But the feelin' is that they finds her some stuck up an' haughty. This yere notion is upheld by Nell callin' her a 'minx,' while Tucson Jennie alloodes to her as a 'cat' on two sep'rate occasions.

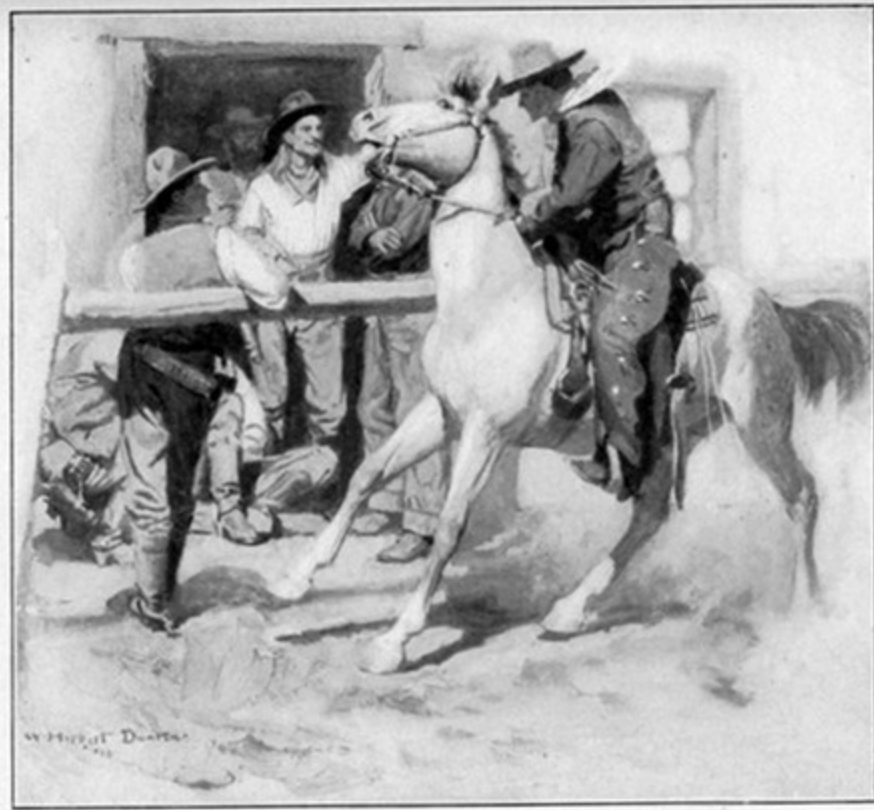
"Dead Shot an' his doll-bride, in the beginnin', seems to be gettin' along all right. It's only when thar's money goin' over, that Dead Shot has to buckle on his guns an' ride out with the stage. This gives him lots of time to hang 'round, an' worship her. Which 18 I'm yere to reemark that if ever a white man sets up an idol, that a-way, an' says his pra'rs to it, that gent's Dead Shot. Thar's nothin' to it; prick her finger, an' you pierce his heart.

""It'd be beautiful if it wasn't awful,' says Faro Nell.

"It ain't a month when events lifts up their p'isin heads, which goes to jestify them comments of Nell's. Thar's been a White House shift back in Washington, an' a new postmaster's sent out. He's a dapper party, with what Peets calls a 'Van Dyke' beard, an' smells like a ha'r-dresser's shop.

"Now if affairs stops thar, we could have stood it; but they don't. I abhors to say so, but it ain't two weeks before Dead Shot's wife's makin' onmistak'ble eyes at that postmaster. Them times when Dead Shot's dooties has took him to the other end of the trail, she's over to the post office constant. None of us says anything, not even to ourselves; but when it gets to whar she shoves you away from the

letter place, an' begins talkin' milk and honey to him right under your nose, onless you're as blind as steeple bats, an' as deaf as the adder of scriptoore which stoppeth her y'ear, you're shore bound to do some thinkin'.



WE'RE ALL DISCUSSIN' THE DOIN'S OF THIS YERE ROAD-AGENT WHEN DAN GETS BACK FROM RED-DOG, AN' THE RESULT IS HE UNLOADS HIS FINDIN'S ON A DEAD KYARD. *p.18.*

"'Which if ever a gov'ment offishul,' exclaims Texas, as he comes t'arin' into the Red Light one evenin', deemandin' drinks--'which if ever a gov'ment offishul goes organizin' his own fooneal that a-way, it's this yere deeboshed postmaster next door!'

"Thar's nothin' said, but we-all knows what's on Texas's mind. That wife of Dead Shot's, for the fo'th time that day, has gone askin' for letters.

""She writes 'em to herse'f,' is the way Missis Rucker lays it down. 'Also, it's doo to the crim'nal besottedness of that egreegious Dead Shot. The man's shorely love-blind!'

""You ain't goin' to t'ar into him for that, be you?' Nell asks, her tones reproachful. 'Him lovin' her like he does shore makes a hit with me. A limit goes in farobank; but my notion is to take the bridle off when the game's love.'

""But all the same he needn't get that lovin' it addles him,' says Missis Rucker. 'In a way, it's Dead Shot's sole fault, her actin' like she does. Instead of keepin' them Mexicans to do 19 her work, Dead Shot ought to make her go surgin' round, an' care for her house herse'f. Thar ain't nobody needs steady employment more'n a woman. You-all savvys where it says that Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do? Which you bet that bluff means women--an' postmasters--every time.'

"Missis Rucker continues along sim'lar lines, mighty inflexible, for quite a spell. She concloodes by sayin':

""You keep a woman walsin' round a cook-stove, or wrastlin' a washtub, or jugglin' pots an' skilletts, same as them sleight-of-hand folks at the Bird Cage Op'ry House, an' she won't be so free to primp an' preen an' look at herse'f in the glass, an' go gaddin' after letters which she herse'f's done writ.'

"We-all can't he'p hearin' this yere, seen' we're settin' round the O. K. dinin' table feedin' at the time; but we stubbornly refooses to be drawed into any views, Enright settin' us the example. That sagacious old warchief merely reaches for the salt-hoss, an' never yeeps; wharupon we maintains ourselves stoodiously yeepless likewise.

"Things goes on swingin' an' rattlin', an' the open-air flirtations which Dead Shot's wife keeps up with that outcast of a postmaster's enough to give you a chill. We sets thar, powerless, expectin' a killin' every minute. An' all the time, like his eyes has took a layoff, Dead Shot wanders to an' fro, boastin' an' braggin' in the mushiest way about his wife. Moreover--an' this trenches on eediotcy--he goes out of his path to make a pard of the postmaster, an' has that deebauchee over to his shack evenin's.

"Dead Shot even begins publicly singin' the praises of this office holder.

"'Which it's this a-way,' he says; 'what with him bein' book-read an' a sport who's seen foreign lands, he's company for my wife. She herse'f's eddicated to a feather-edge; an', nacherally, that's what gives 'em so much in common.'

"Thar's all the same a note in Dead Shot's voice that's like the echo of a groan. It looks, too, as though it sets fire to Texas, who jumps up as if he's stung by a trant'ler.

"'Come,' he says, grabbin' Boggs by the shoulder.

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"Texas has Boggs drug half-way to the door, before Enright can head 'em off.

"'Whar to?' demands Enright; an' then adds, 'don't you-all boys go nigh that post office.'

"'All right,' says Texas final, but gulpin' a little; 'since it's you who says so, Sam, we won't. Me an' Dan yere'll merely take a little *passear* as far as the graveyard, by way of reecoverin' our sperits an' to get the air. I'll shore blow up if obleeged to listen to that Dead Shot any longer.'

"'I sees it in his eye,' Enright explains in a low tone to Peets, as he resoomes his cha'r; 'Texas is simply goin' to bend his gun over that letter man's head.'

"'How often has I told you, Dan,' asks Texas, after they gets headed for Boot Hill, an' Texas has regained his aplomb, 'that women is a brace game?'

"'Not all women,' Boggs objects; 'thar's Nell.'

"'Shore; Nell!' Texas consents. 'Sech as her has all of the honor an' honesty of a Colt's-45. A gent can rely on the Nellie brand, same as he can on his guns. But Nellie's one in one 22 thousand. Them other nine hundred an' ninety-nine'll deal you the odd-kyard, Dan, every time.'

"When Texas an' Boggs arrives at Boot Hill, Texas goes seelectin' about, same as if he's searchin' out a site for a grave. At last he finds a place whar thar's nothin' but mesquite, soapweed an' rocks, it's that ornery:

"'Yere's whar we plants him,' says Texas; 'off yere, by himse'f, like as if he's so much carrion.'

"'Who you talkin' about?' asks Boggs, some amazed.

"'Who?' repeats Texas; 'whoever but that postmaster? Dead Shot's got to get him soon or late. An' followin' the obsequies, thar ain't goin' to be no night gyards neither. Which if them coyotes wants to dig him up, they're welcome. It's their lookout, not mine; an' I ain't got no love for coyotes no how.'

"'Thar ain't no coyote in Cochise County who's sunk that low he'll eat him,' says Boggs.

"Like every other outfit, Wolfville sees its hours of sunshine an' its hours of gloom, its lights an' its shadders. But I'm yere to state that it never suffers through no more

nerve-rackin' 23 eepock than that which it puts in about Dead Shot an' his wife. She don't bother us so much as him. It's Dead Shot himse'f, praisin' up the postmaster an' paintin' the sun-kissed virchoose of his wife, which keeps the sweat a-pourin' down the commoonal face. An' all that's left us is to stand pat, an' wait for the finish!

"One day the Wells-Fargo people sends Dead Shot to Santa Fe to take a money box over to Taos. Two days later, Dead Shot's wife finds she's got to go visit Tucson. Likewise, the postmaster allows he's been ordered to Wilcox, to straighten out some deepartmental kinks. Which we certainly sets thar an' looks at each other!--the play's that rank.

"The postmaster an' Dead Shot's wife goes rumblin' out on the same stage. Monte starts to tell us what happens when he returns, but the old profligate don't get far.

"'Gents,' he says, 'that last trip, when Dead Shot's---'

"'Shet up,' roars Enright, an' Monte shore shets up.

"It comes plenty close to killin' the mis'rable old dipsomaniac at that. He swells an' he 24 swells, with that pent-up information inside of him, until he looks like a dissipated toad. But sech is his awe of Enright, he never dar's opens his clamshell.

"It's a week before Dead Shot's wife gets back, an' the postmaster don't show up till four days more. Then Dead Shot himse'f comes trackin' in.

"Faro Nell, who's eyes is plumb keen that a-way, lets on to Cherokee private that Dead Shot looks sorrow-ridden. But I don't know! Dead Shot's nacherally grave, havin' no humor. A gent who constant goes messin' round with road

agents, shootin' an' bein' shot at, ain't apt to effervesce. Nell sticks to it, jest the same, that he's onder a cloud.

"Dead Shot continyoos to play his old system, an' cavorts 'round plumb friendly with the postmaster, an' goes teeterin' yere an' thar tellin' what a boon from heaven on high his wife is, same as former.

"Faro Nell shakes her head when Cherokee mentions this last:

"'That's his throw-off,' she says.

"One evenin' Dead Shot comes trailin' into 25 the Red Light, an' strolls over to whar Cherokee's dealin' bank.

"'What's the limit?' he asks.

"At this, we-all looks up a whole lot. It's the first time ever Dead Shot talks of puttin' down a bet.

"Cherokee's face is like a mask, the face of the thorough-paced kyard sharp. He shows no more astonishment than if Dead Shot's been settin' in ag'inst his game every evenin' for a month.

"'One hundred an' two hundred,' says Cherokee.

"'Bueno!' an' Dead Shot lays down two one-hundred dollar bills between the king and queen.

"Thar's two turns. The third the kyards falls 'ten-king,' an' Nell, from her place on the lookout's stool, shoves over two hundred dollars in bloo checks. Thar they are, with the two one-hundred dollar bills, between the king an' queen.

"'Does it go as it lays?' asks Dead Shot, it bein' double the limit.

"'It goes,' says Cherokee, never movin' a muscle.

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"One turn, an' the kyards falls 'trey-queen.' Nell shoves four hundred across to match up with Dead Shot's four

hundred.

"'An' now?' Dead Shot asks.

"'I'll turn for it,' Cherokee responds.

"It's yere that Dead Shot's luck goes back on him. The turn comes 'queen-jack,' an' Nell rakes down the eight hundred.

"Dead Shot's hand goes to the butt of his gun.

"'I've been robbed,' he growls; 'thar's fifty-three kyards in that deck.'

"Cherokee's on his feet, his eyes like two steel p'int's, gun half drawn. But Nell's as quick. Her hand's on Cherokee's, an' she keeps his gun whar it belongs.

"'Steady!' she says; 'can't you see he's only coixin' you to bump him off?' Then, with her face full on Dead Shot, she continyoos: 'It won't do, Dead Shot; it won't do none! You-all can't get it handed to you yere! You're in the wrong shop; you-all ought to try next door!' An' Nell p'int's with her little thumb through the wall to the post office.

"Dead Shot stands thar the color of seegyar ashes, while Cherokee settles ca'mly back in his 27 cha'r. Cherokee's face is as bar' of expression as a blank piece of paper, as he runs his eye along the lay-out, makin' ready for the next turn. Thar's mebbly a dozen of us playin', but not a word is spoke. Everyone is onto Dead Shot's little game, the moment Nell begins to talk.

"Matters seems to hang on centers, ontill Nell stretches across an' lays her baby hand on Dead Shot's:

"'Thar ain't a soul in sight,' she says, mighty soft an' good, 'but what's your friend, Dead Shot.'

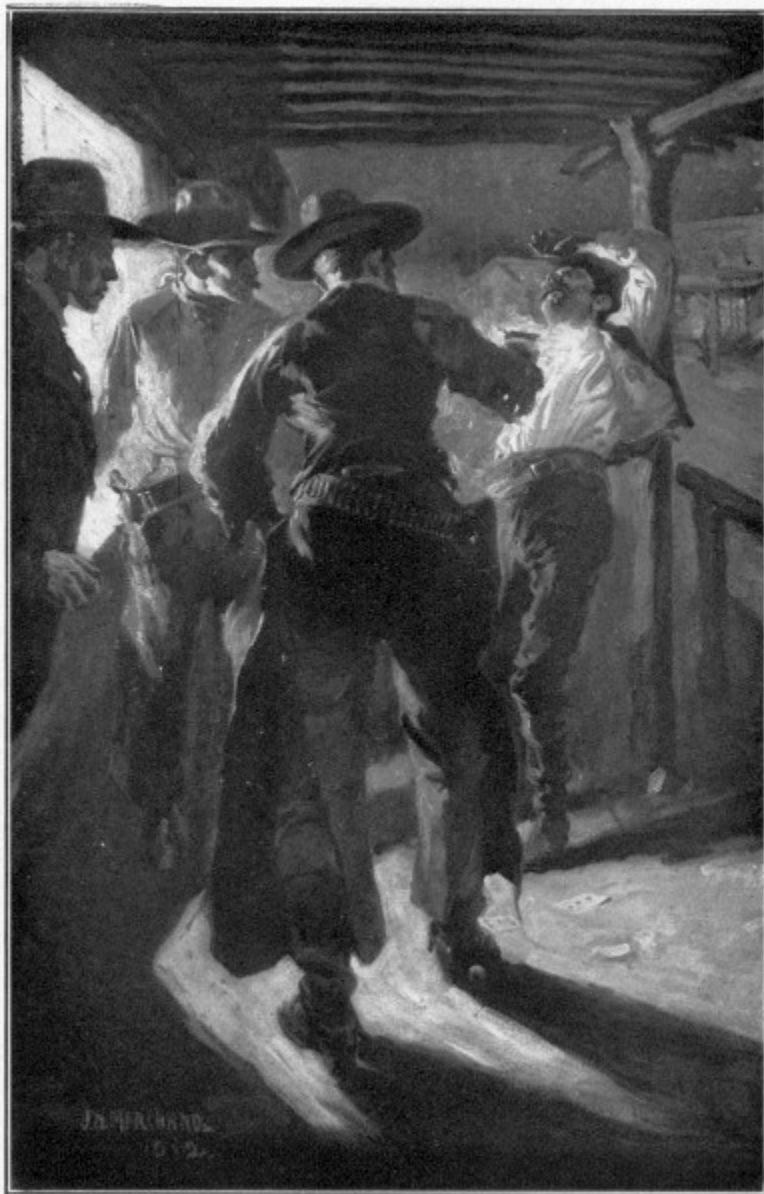
"Dead Shot, pale as a candle, wheels toward the door.

"'Pore Dead Shot!' murmurs Nell, the tears in her eyes, to that extent she has to ask Boggs to take her place as lookout.

"Four hours goes by, an' thar's the poundin' of a pony's hoofs, an' the creak of saddle-leathers, out in front. It's the Red Dog chief, who's come lookin' for Enright.

"They confabs a minute or two at a table to the r'ar, an' then Enright calls Peets over.

"'Dead Shot's gone an' got himse'f downed,' he says.



DEAD SHOT STOPS SHORT AT THIS HITCH IN THE DISCUSSION, BY REASON OF A BULLET FROM THE LIGHTIN' BUG'S PISTOL WHICH LODGES IN HIS LUNG. p.29.

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"'It's on the squar' gents,' explains the Red Dog chief; 'Dead Shot'll say so himself. He jest nacherally comes huntin' it.'

"It looks like Dead Shot, after that failure with Cherokee in the Red Light, p'int's across for Red Dog. He searches out a party who's called the Lightnin' Bug, on account of the spontaneous character of his six-shooter. Dead Shot finds the Lightnin' Bug talkin' with two fellow gents. He listens awhile, an' then takes charge of the conversation.

"'Bug,' he says, raisin' his voice like it's a challenge--'Bug, only I'm afraid folks'll string you up a whole lot, I'd say it's you who stood up the stage last week in Apache Canyon. Also'--an' yere Dead Shot takes to gropin' about in his jeans, same as if he's feelin' for a knife--'it's mighty customary with me, on occasions sech as this, to cut off the y'ears of---'

"Dead Shot stops short, by reason of a bullet from the Bug's pistol which lodges in his lungs.

"When Peets an' Enright finds him, he's spread out on the Red Dog chief's blankets, coughin' blood, with the sorrow-stricken Bug 29 proppin' him up one moment to drink water, an' sheddin' tears over him the next, alternate.

"The Red Dog chief leads out the weepin' Bug, who's lamentin' mighty grievous, an' leaves Enright an' Peets with Dead Shot.

"'It's all right, gents,' whispers Dead Shot; 'I comes lookin' for it, an' I gets it. Likewise, she ain't to blame; it's

me. I oughtn't to have married her that time--she only a girl, an' me a full-growed man who should 'av had sense for both.'

"That's no lie,' says Peets, an' Dead Shot gives him a grateful look.

"'No,' he goes on, 'she's too fine, too high--I wasn't her breed. An' I ought to have seen it.' Yere he has a tussle to hang on.

"Peets pours him out some whiskey.

"'It's lickin', ain't it?' Dead Shot gasps, sniffin' the glass. 'I'm for water, Doc, lickin' makin' me that ornery.'

"'Down with it,' urges Peets. 'Which, if I'm a jedge, you'll pack in long before you're due to start anything extra serious, even if you drinkt a gallon.'

"'Shore!' agrees Dead Shot, as though the idee brings him relief. 'For a moment it slips 30 my mind about me bein' plugged. But as I'm sayin', gents, don't blame her. An' don't blame him. I has my chance, an' has it all framed up, too, when I crosses up with 'em recent over in Tucson, to kill 'em both. But I can't do it, gents. The six-shooter at sech a time's played out. That's straight; it don't fill the bill; it ain't adequate, that a-way. So all I can do is feel sorry for 'em, an' never let 'em know I knows. For, after all, it ain't their fault, it's mine. You sports see that, don't you? She's never meant for me, bein' too fine; an', me a man, I ought to have knowed.'

"Dead Shot ceases talkin', an' Enright glances at Peets. Peets shakes his head plenty sorrowful.

"'Go on,' he says to Dead Shot; 'you-all wants us to do--what?'

"'Thar you be!' an' at the sound of Peets' voice Dead Shot's mind comes creepin' back to camp. 'She'll be happy with him--they havin' so much in common--an' him an' her bein' eddicated that a-way--an' him havin' traveled a whole lot! An' this yere's what I wants, gents. I wants you-all, as a kindness to 31 me an' in a friendly way--seein' I can't stay none to look-out the play myse'f--to promise to sort o' supervise round an' put them nuptials over right. I takes time by the forelock an' sends to Tucson for a sky-pilot back two days ago. Bar accidents, he'll be in camp by to-morry. He can work in at the funeral, too, an' make it a whipsaw.'

"Dead Shot turns his eyes on Enright. It's always so about our old chief; every party who's in trouble heads for him like a coyote for a camp fire.

"'You'll shore see that he marries her?--Promise!'

"Thar's a quaver in Dead Shot's voice, Peets tells me, that's like a pra'r.

"'Thar's my hand, Dead Shot,' says Enright, who's chokin' a little. 'So far as the letter man's concerned, it'll be the altar or the windmill, Jack Moore an' a lariat or that preacher party you refers to.'

"Dead Shot's gettin' mighty weak. After Enright promises he leans back like he's takin' a rest. He's so still they're beginnin' to figger he's done cashed in; but all at once he starts 32 up like he's overlooked some bet, an' has turned back from eternity to tend to it.

"'About Cherokee an' his box,' he whispers; 'that's a lyin' bluff I makes. Tell him I don't mean nothin'; I'm only out to draw his fire.'

"After this Dead Shot only rouses once. His voice ain't more'n a sigh.

"'I forgets to tell you,' he says, 'to give her my love. An' you say, too, that I'm bumped off like snuffin' out a candle--too plumb quick for her to get yere. An' don't blame her, gents; it's not her fault, it's mine.'

"It's the week after the fooneal. The postmaster's still in town, partly by nacheral preference, partly because Enright notifies Jack Moore to ride herd on him, an' fill him as full of lead as a bag of bullets in event he ondertakes to go stampedin' off.

"In the Red Light the seventh evenin' Enright rounds up Peets.

"'Doc,' he says, 'a month would be more respect'ble, but this yere's beginnin' to tell on me.'

"'Besides,' Peets chips in, by way of he'pin' Enright out, 'that preacher sharp corraled over 33 to Missis Rucker's is gettin' restless. Onless we side-lines or puts hobbles on that divine we-all can't expect to go holdin' him much longer.'

"Enright leads the way to the r'ar wareroom of the Noo York store, which bein' whar the stranglers holds their meetin's is Wolfville's hall of jestice. After licker is brought Enright sends Jack Moore for the postmaster, who comes in lookin' plenty white. Missis Rucker brings over the divine; an' next Dead Shot's widow--she's plumb lovely in black--appears on the arm of Peets, who goes in person.

"Thar's a question in the widow's eye, like she don't onderstand.

"'Roll your game,' says Enright to the preacher sharp.

"It's yere an' now Dead Shot's widow fully b'ars out that philos'pher who announces so plumb cold, that a-way, that women's the sublimation of the onexpected. Jack Moore's jest beginnin' to manoever that recreant public servant into p'sition on the widow's left hand, so's he can be married to the best advantage, an' the preacher sharp's gettin' out 34 an' openin' his book of rooles, when the widow draws back.

"P'intin' at the bridegroom postmaster, same as if he's a stingin' lizard, she addresses Enright.

"'Whatever's the meanin' of this?'

"'Merely the croode preelim'naries, Ma'am,' Enright explains, 'to what we-all trusts will prove a fa'rly deesir'ble weddin'.'

"'Me marry him?' an' the onmitigated scorn that relict exhibits, to say nothin' of her tone of voice, shore makes the postmaster bridegroom feel chagrined.

"'You'll pardon us, Ma'am,' returns Enright, soft an' depreecatory, tryin' to get her feelin's bedded down, 'which you'll shore pardon us if in our dullness we misreads your sentiments. You see, the notion gets somehow proned into us that you wants this party. Which if we makes a mistake, by way of repa'rin' that error, let me say that if thar's any one else in sight whom you preefers, an' who's s'fficiently single an' yoothful to render him el'gible for wedlock,'--yere Enright takes in Boggs an' Texas with his gaze, wharat Texas grows as green-eyed as a cornered 35 bobcat--'he's yours, Ma'am, on your p'intin' him out.'

"'Which I don't want to marry no one,' cries the widow, commencin' to sob. 'An' as for marryin' him speshul'--yere she glances at the bridegroom postmaster in sech a hot an'