

LONE DOG'S NEW AGENT.

BY F. B. WRIGHT.

Brainard was the new agent's name, and he was slight and young looking and curly headed. The N. W. and M. had appointed him station agent at Lone Dog because no one else would take the job.

Lone Dog resented Brainard's apparent youth, his cleanliness and his sobriety, the last two constituting the height of eccentricity in Lone Dog, and four nights after his arrival whirled in to have fun with the "kid tenderfoot." It was harmless fun enough. But the boy—he was little more—did not understand it and grew angry, then sullen and then scared, to the great delight of the circle of grinning cowboys lounging under the station lamp. They made the boy tell them of the east; they made him speak pieces, dance and sing; then, the fun flagging, some ingeniously inclined gentlemen had rifled his shabby little trunk and held its contents up for derision.

"Gents," cried a bandy legged individual in "chaps" and sombrero, jumping on to the one ink stained table and holding up a photograph to the audience—"gents, I want to call your attention to the most unparalleled and stupendous curiosity ever found in these yere parts—a genuine picture of a gal and a mighty fine gal too. None of these yere circuit shooters, this ain't, but the real article; only needs to be seen to be appreciated. In order to avoid a rumpus over this yere work of art I'm going to give you all a chance at it. What do you bid for it? Come high, boys, for the honor of Lone Dog."

The idea caught the crowd. There were cries of "Hand it around, Bud!" "The kid's gal, you say?" "Durned if I ain't forgot what a woman looks like. I ain't seen one since last roundup!" And amid a chorus of comment and suggestion the bidding went on.

At last it was knocked down to Steven Oliver of the —X ranch outfit, the price being drinks for the crowd.

"Who is it, kid?" said Steve when he returned to his place against the wall.

"It's—it's—my sister," answered the boy coloring. "Please give it back to me."

"Don't you fret; you'll get it back again, sonny. Sister, ah?" Steve moved over toward the one lamp and studied the picture, while the other men turned to fresh devices.

These consisted in making the boy drink. He didn't seem to be cheerful enough they said.

The boy refused and then after many threats touched his lips gingerly to a bottle and choked.

"I can't," he said coughing and sputtering. "You don't pass out like that," growled the owner of the bottle. "You drink!"

"I can't," said young Brainard, "and I won't."

"Says 'shan't' and 'won't' just like a sure enough man," continued his tormentor. "Well you've got to. We don't like prohibitioners around here. They ain't popular." The man twisted his hand in the collar of the boy's blue shirt as he spoke, but the boy tore away, sprang across the room and pulled a pistol. For a moment it looked as if the comedy was about to change to tragedy, and then the boy's arm was knocked up and the gun wrenched from his trembling hand. It was the cow boy who had bought the picture.

"You're old to play with those things, sonny," he said quietly, "and too young to get shot." Then he turned to the others. "I don't know how you feel, boys," he said, "but I don't reckon I keer for no more fun tonight—at least this here kind. Playin' with children is mighty comical, but they're liable to get too familiar to suit me. I move we pull our freight to the saloon. The drinks are on me."

It was, on the whole, a good natured crowd, and Steve was popular, wherefore it took the hint and its ponies and departed whooping.

An hour later Steve returned. The lamp was out, and he was about to ride along when he heard the sound of sobbing from the dark interior of the station.

"Holy smoke! They don't breed men where he comes from, that's sure," said he, dismounting and going to the door. He moved toward the sound and made out the boy crouching beside a bench, his face in his hand. At the jar of heavy footsteps the boy started, but Steve laid a kindly hand on his shoulder. "There, sonny, don't take on like that when there ain't no reason. The boys was just playin'! They didn't mean no harm unless you'd pulled that trigger."

"I'd have killed him," sobbed the boy, "if he'd touched me again!"

Steve chuckled. "He was safe enough, kid. It was the rest of us you had scared. It was plumb ridiculous."

The boy apparently did not see the comicality of the situation, for he continued crying softly, while Steve looked on, powerless to help. A crying man was something new in his philosophy.

"Look here, kid," he said at last, "why did you come here anyway? You're mighty

young and inexperienced for this here strenuous life."

"I had to. This was the only place I could get."

"Ain't you got no kin?"

"They are all dead."

"Your sister—she ain't, is she?"

"My sister? What sister? What do you mean?"

"The sister whose picture the boys was admirin' of."

"Oh, she? She's living."

There was a long pause. "She's a right purty gal," said Steve. "I've been studyin' that picture. She certainly favors you a heap—that is, if she has yaller hair, like yours. Has she?"

"Yes," returned the boy; "it's just the color of mine."

"I reckoned so. Long, I bet, and curly. I knowed it. What's her name?"

"Ec—Jessie."

"Jessie?" Steve pondered over the name as if to see if it would fit his preconceived notions. You'll be having her on here soon, I reckon, won't you? I'm powerful anxious to come up with your sister."

The boy gave a queer little laugh, which changed to a sigh.

"I guess not now," he said, "after what's happened. I must go away—go back. I ought never to have come. I didn't see it before. Oh, you can't understand," he cried. "I don't want to go. I haven't any situation nor money nor friends!" He broke down, sobbing, again.

"And run away from nothing. The boys ain't goin' to do no harm. I'll see you don't get missed with too much."

"But when you ain't there what would happen? Oh, if you hadn't been here tonight! No; there's no way but for me to leave."

Steve shifted uneasily in his chair. "This here sister of yours," he said at last, "do you reckon now she'd marry me if I could git to ask her?" He stopped the boy as he was about to speak. "Just keep quiet, sonny, and let me bark a spell. I've been doing a lot of thinkin' since I come here this evening, and it's been about her. I've been driftin' around these parts for the last ten years and more, ever since I was half as young as you, getting into scrapes and out of 'em, riding the ranges, roundin' up, fightin' when I had to, drinkin' and gamblin' and shootin' up a town, just like all men does out here, without there's a woman to hold 'em steady, and tonight when I see your sister's picture it comes across me that I wanted to settle down, and I wanted her to help me. That's why I don't want you to go away, kid, for if you do I won't get no chance to see her and ask her. Do you reckon she'd look at me, kid?"

The boy said nothing for a moment, while Steve watched him anxiously. The dawn was just breaking over the plains and a pale light came through the dirty windows of the station.

"I—I haven't any sister," said the boy huskily at last. "I lied to you, but you're been too good to me, and I can't keep it up. I—the picture—it's me. I'm—oh can't you see—I'm a girl!"

"A girl! I'll be!" Steve didn't finish the sentence. He rose and went to the window and looked out on the faint gray green of the sagebrush. Brainard continued as if in defense: "I had to do it. I helped my brother in the station at home and learned to telegraph. Then he died, and no one had any work for a girl—at least work I could do. Then I thought I would come west, dressed as a man, and I got this job, and now—now you know why I've got to go back."

Steve turned and came to the side of the girl. "You ain't got to go back, and you ain't a goin'—not if I can help it. I might have known you was a woman, only I didn't know women had such grit. Look here, kid—I mean—that is—"

"Jessie was my sister's name," said the girl, with a little laugh.

"Well, I'm rough, and I don't deserve no such gal as you, Jessie, but there's a heap of men git what they don't deserve, and I ain't so mighty bad. You say you kin telegraph. Well, you sit down then to that ticker and do some telegraphin' for me, one up the line for a new agent for Lone Dog Station and one to Prairie City for a parson. And tell 'em I give 'em until tomorrow mornin' to git here on the first train," added Steve Oliver, with emphasis.

Garden Hotbeds.

Starting the bed is an important matter, and is really the pivotal point of success or failure. If built upon the surface it is far better to have the location well covered with litter of some kind during the winter. If this has been neglected, then the ice and snow must be cleared away. The foundation ought to be at least eighteen inches larger each way than the size of the box. The particular work is in spreading and tramping of the manure. Uneven or loosely tramped places will make no end of trouble by settling unevenly, and good plants in such a bed are out of the question. After nearly sufficient height of manure is put on then place the boxes and fill both outside and in. Cold weather will require that the manure be piled and well tramped on the outside clear to the top, and more to



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be put on as it settles down. The inside surface is best kept the same slope as the top of the box. After this the soil can be filled in and the sash put on. They should be raised at intervals for a few days until the rank heat passes off. The temperature will probably go high for a few days—nearly 100 degrees or more. This will do no harm, but when it settles back to about 90 degrees it is safe to put in the seed. From then on it must be closely watched, as a bright day even with cold weather outside will very quickly run the inside temperature above the safety point, so frequent ventilation is the remedy. While mixed manure, with more or less shavings, leaves, or other coarse litter, is often used for heating, the safest and best is grain fed horse manure with a liberal supply of straw bedding. It is the best kept under shelter and hauled sufficiently to prevent burning. A few days before required for use it is well to fork it thoroughly and pile up to start the heat, and wet a little also if necessary. A second piling and forking is good practice also, to distribute the heat as much and as evenly as possible. When well started again it is ready for use. One large glass entirely to fill a sash is, of course, best of all. They are expensive, however, and if once broken it costs considerable to replace them. The sash are usually made in regular sizes at the factories, but can be ordered any size desired. This always costs extra for readjusting the machinery. Perhaps the better way is first to order the sash, then the boxes can be made to accommodate the size and number desired.—Michigan Correspondence Rural New Yorker.

Mastication.

The primary object of mastication is to break up the food so as to facilitate the swallowing of it and, still more important, to insure its intimate admixture with the digestive juices, not only within the mouth, but throughout the entire digestive tract. Mastication has however, other important and far reaching effects. Thus it promotes the flow of saliva and, when properly performed, secures a due insalivation of the food; it increases the quantity of alkaline saliva passing into the stomach; it stimulates the heart and circulation, and it finally influences the nutrition of the jaws and their appendages by stimulating the local blood and lymph circulation.

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As We Find Him.

We came upon the college man in the green sweater.

"Studying much?" we asked.

"Studying?" he echoed, his eyes dilating with astonishment. "Well, I guess not. I finished up football in the fall; now I'm playing hockey; soon it will be polo, then lacrosse, and later on baseball."

"When do you expect to open your books?"

"Well, during next vacation, if I get a chance."

Washing Machines.



Judging from the very number of Washing Machines we have sold during the last year, we know that of the many useful mechanical helps that contribute to the comfort and happiness of the well-appointed modern home, the washing machine is by no means the least important, and if it could not be readily replaced, would be one of the last of such aids to be parted with. Any Washing Machine is preferable, tenfold, to the washboard.

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