

*Windy Bill Wicks could usually talk himself out of anything, but the more he talked to that tough stranger, the worse things got.*



## HORSE-TRADIN' HOMBRE

BY C. K. SHAW

DICK MÜLLER is the kid me and Bluey Beck is raisin' on shares, and anybody that thinks rearin' a button is a cinch, ain't never seen Dick. Take that from me, Windy Bill Wicks.

The three of us, Dick, Bluey an'

me, had left the Bar H and was headin' for Rimrock to see what the news was on the latest stick-up of Denver Dan. I was worried over admiration in Dick's voice when he mentioned how smart Denver was and how easy he made his money,

just robbin' a bank or stickin' up a stage. Bluey was good at teachin' the kid how to shoot and rope and haze in the night herd, but learnin' him the finer things was plump up to me. I cleared my throat.

"Honesty," I says, "can't be put on the shelf one day and took down the next. Denver Dan and his two pards will be hunted like coyotes and end up as tassels on the end of a rope."

"Denver is mighty smart," the button says back, takin' a keen look at the nag I was ridin'. "Seems to me that horse shys mighty easy, Windy."

I'd been observin' the same thing with a sinkin' of the stomach. My new mare was a neat pattern, packin' good tallow, but she had a way of humpin' and shiverin' at plain noises 'longside of the road.

"She's blind in that right eye," Bluey announces bluntlike. "Ol' Pass-the-hat put the skids under you in that trade, Windy."

"Blind!" Dick yells.

"I thought it was funny Pass-the-hat would give you such a good trade after the skinnin' you give him on the last deal," Bluey added.

Dick looked at me puzzled. "You think Pass-the-hat lied to you about her being sound as a dollar?" he asked.

"Pass-the-hat is honest," I begins firm, knowin' I'd have to put it over to the kid that lyin' comes in different zones. Besides, Pass-the-hat was a deacon, bein' the one to circulate the hat, so's you could ante to the church kitty. I didn't want Dick to get poor ideas of the church folks.

"His word is good *anywhere, anytime*," I goes on. "Horse tradin' don't count. Nobody's their brother's keeper then. If you can't tell the age of a horse by his teeth, you better not trade. If you can't

spot a ring bone, or tell when a horse has et loco weed, or has the thumps, you'd better take up a notch in your belt 'fore somebody skins you out o' your pants. That don't mean nobody is crooked or lyin', that's just horse tradin'."

The kid nodded, some puzzled, but workin' on the facts I'd laid down. My horse took another blind stagger, and I wasn't in no humor to orate longer on ol' Pass-the-hat's honesty. Bluey took up the subject, which is unusual for him, as he gen'rally leaves the finer parts of the educatin' up to me. He said anybody that got the skids put under them in a horse trade, had it comin' to them. And he mentioned about gettin' your eye teeth cut. I was gettin' ready to wither him down, when Dick says somethin' about the reform movements Mrs. Hip-shot Bailey and the other ladies of Rimrock are puttin' on.

"Mrs. Hip-shot is always at the head of something us fellers don't like," Bluey shoots back.

If it hadn't been for Bluey's remark about the eye teeth, I'd a' not offered any argument favorin' Mrs. Hip-shot, even if her and me is friends. Personal, I think a puncher has as good a right to gamble as a lady has to sing in the choir. But now I was kind o' peeved.

"Dick," I says, "you got to have respect for all reform movements. I'm ashamed of the way Bluey is not for reform."

"Mrs. Hip-shot is now starting a humane society," Dick says. "She says punchers are cruel to their horses, and she's organizing the ladies against it."

Bluey snorted.

"That's a very fine thing!" I was still rememberin' that remark of Bluey's about gettin' your eye teeth

cut in a horse trade. "I've always thought Rimrock oughta have such a society."

**B**BLUEY spurred to a gallop and me and Dick fogged along with him. It was ten o'clock when we hit town and beginnin' to get hot. We trotted up to a crowd that was gathered back a ways from the Main Street waterin' trough.

Sheriff Ham Nolan ambled over to us wearin' both his guns which I reckoned was due to Denver Dan bein' headed our way. Mrs. Hip-shot Bailey was 'longside him and they was both hot under the collar.

"The man this town has for sheriff is certainly lacking in the milk of human kindness," Mrs. Hip-shot says to some of the ladies on the sidewalk. "Right here on our Main Street a heartless puncher abuses a horse and our sheriff stands by with his hands in his pockets!"

Then I noticed that a puncher was havin' a misunderstandin' with a rawboned roan horse at the waterin' trough. The animal was swingin' a hook-nosed, ornery-looking head and settin' back against the bridle reins. The puncher was a stranger, red-headed, red-faced and mighty low on patience. On account of the ladies on the sideline, he couldn't say much to the maggoty-lookin' roan, but ever so often he would take him across the shoulder with his quirt, and yank on the reins. I wondered why he didn't get in the saddle and sock the spurs to the roan, then I noticed the side of his face was scraped, like he'd been pitched to the street and kind o' slid a few feet.

"Won't some of you men do something?" Mrs. Hip-shot cried. "Is this inhuman treatment to continue until that poor animal drops dead?"

I thought she was underestimatin' the stayin' qualities of the roan. In

fact, it looked to me like somebody'd better take that puncher a drink. Then I heard Dick talkin' and my brain quit workin' at all.

"Windy'll do something about it," he says to Mrs. Hip-shot. "He thinks Rimrock needs a society like this."

Mrs. Hip-shot steamed over my way, looking delighted. "I'm glad to hear that, Windy," she says. "That puncher has even resorted to kicking that poor horse."

"My gosh!" I says, my brain still paralyzed.

She turned to the ladies. "Windy Wicks will stop it!" she cried.

Dick threw out his chest and his eyes began to shine. I still couldn't think of nothin' to say so I done the elegant thing by bowin' to the ladies. That settled it. They had me on the way to the waterin' trough in nothin' flat. Ham and Bluey backed away, afraid they might somehow get roped in, too.

The closer I got to that sweatin' puncher, the more I knew I was in for trouble. He saw me comin' and hunched his shoulders, his face goin' on guard.

"Maybe you think this is your put in?" he asked kind o' hopeful. I could see he'd sure be glad to shift his efforts from that bullet-headed roan to a mere human. He was squat-built, kind o' on my order, with a jaw that hadn't been skimped none. He'd be a tough hombre in a fight, and besides he was lots madder than me. I didn't offer him no smile, which I knew would be fatal, but my brain was beginnin' to work. I had led my horse along with me, because I hadn't thought to drop the reins, and now I give her a drink. When I talked, it was too low for the folks on the sidewalk to hear.

"'Bout the only way to handle

them that's sired by the devil is to shoot 'em," I says.

**T**HE puncher looked disappointed. "I thought maybe them women had sent you out to tell me to pet him and talk nice."

I laughed and walked around the roan, my brain doin' its regular stuff. "I've always wanted a dusty roan," I says. "I've heard that color is tough on the range—"

"Iron-clad!" that puncher snaps me up so fast the words was singed. "A dusty roan is the best color on the top of the earth, and take a head shaped like this boy's, it means plenty!"

"Does it?" I asks. I didn't want that roan no more than I wanted boils, but neither did I want to tangle with this redhead. I could see Bluey and Ham Nolan waitin' for the fireworks with wide grins. Dick was all puffed up with pride and Mrs. Hip-shot was tellin' the ladies it was lucky Windy Bill Wicks come to town.

The puncher smelled a way to trade himself out o' the mess, and set to work. He waved aside my mention of the hook nose. "Just shows extra determination. You wouldn't want a horse with no determination."

"I reckon not," I says. "How'd he get all them scars?"

"A tree fell on him. Don't think nothin' of this little stubborn streak today—he's nervous with folks lookin' at him. Mister, I'd hate to trade this roan; he's like a brother to me, but I've taken a fancy to that little mare you got there. Don't know why; she's ten if she's a day, and half asleep, and I'll bet she puffs and lathers the first fast mile."

I looked at the little mare with her neat head and kind eyes—on which the cataracts didn't show.

"She's a little short of wind," I admitted.

"Sure, and you need an iron-clad horse like this roan. If it wasn't I've took a shine to you, I wouldn't trade. I'll let you have Roany for the mare even up, and that's the trade of your life."

"I've always wanted a dusty roan," I says, watchin' from the tail of my eyes at how Ham and Bluey was fidgetin'. They'd be as popular as mice in the churn if I put this over. "If you're sure he's gentle."

"Gentle!" he cries, uncinchin' his saddle. "You can get off this horse either side."

I jerked off my saddle, beginnin' to figure on how I'd get the roan away from the waterin' trough. The puncher didn't lose no time. He was set on gettin' away before I tried to move that roan out o' the tracks he'd dug for himself. Bluey and Ham ambled over.

"I never saw nobody that could strike up a trade faster'n Windy," Bluey said. "Some day he'll dicker for himself a wife."

"He ain't got this horse led away yet," Ham said, still hopeful.

I'd dropped my saddle by the trough. I could see Roany figured he'd won the round. He'd come out of his backward slant, and rolled his eyes down till they wasn't all white. He was wonderin' if it wasn't time to eat. I had a hunch he'd lead up if there wasn't no saddle on his back. I rubbed his nose and he didn't object.

Mrs. Hip-shot come a ways into the street, sayin' she'd not come too close as the poor animal might stand on his hind legs and start pawin' again. "It was noble of you to trade for him, Windy, to make sure he'd never be abused again."

"Nice ol' boy," I says, givin' the scarred neck a pat. Roany didn't

especial want his neck patted, but he did see where it was all leadin' to oats, so he give me a nudge.

"Mar-vel-ous!" cries Mrs. Hip-shot, and calls to the ladies to see what kindness can accomplish. Then she slanted Ham a look. "And this is the horse you called an ornery bullet head, Sheriff Nolan!"

"Cinch the leather on him," snaps the sheriff at me, but I didn't hear. I even left my saddle by the trough so's the roan wouldn't see it and get suspicious. I picked up the reins, but didn't put no pressure on them. That hunk of Satan rolled up in a roan hide shook himself, took a look around and led up like an old plow horse.

"See that!" cries Mrs. Hip-shot. "It shows the poor animal recognizes a friend and a *good* man when he sees one!"

I took off my hat to show Mrs. Hip-shot I appreciated her remarks, but now I was beginnin' to wonder how I'd get the roan out of town. Sheriff Nolan and Bluey clumped along with me to the livery stable.

"You're a fool for luck, Windy," Bluey snorts.

"Luck?" I asks, my tones nippy.

"I won't dare show my head around town for a week," Ham moans. "Dang your skin, Windy." Then he brightened. "But you ain't got that roan out o' town yet—not by a jugful."

The words didn't feel good along my spine, but I never let on.

**WE** didn't talk much about the roan, 'cause Ham and Bluey was sore and I was worried. I give the ornery cuss a good feed of oats, and we all went to Dick's favorite restaurant and had steak an' fried spuds an' apple pie. Then we talked about Denver Dan. Ham said Denver was the hardest man to hold in

a net he'd ever tried. And that was a scopical statement, 'cause Ham's no slouch of a man chaser.

"If Denver heads this way, I've got to get him!" Ham says. "If he runs loose much longer, there'll be others tryin' the game."

"He's a smart one," Dick put in. "Six bits you don't get him."

A cloud of dust rolled into town and in the middle of it was Gumboil Georges of the SV with word that Denver had took a fat treasure box off the stage sixty miles up the road, and was headed across the Blues for Idaho. Ham Nolan showed himself fast on the trigger, and soon every mounted man in town was ready to start. Ham scattered them out, takin' the most likely path himself, and tellin' me and Bluey to block the trail over Cherry Mountain.

I heeled it after Bluey into the stable, and was reachin' for my saddle when I remembered the only horse I owned was the roan. Bluey slapped his saddle onto his back.

"I'll let you smell the reward money after I collect, Windy," he says. "Less you figure to try some more kindness on that bullet head."

I kept my saddle movin' in the direction of Roany. That was the worst with such horses, you never knew what they'd do. I've seen them travel like lambs all day and at night, when their rider was tired, bog their heads and fly at it.

The roan had finished his oats and et some hay. He didn't object to the bridle, which was a good sign, and he even breathed in my ear he led up so close as we left the stable. Dick was waitin' with Snip saddled; the kid had his .22 resting across in front of him.

"This ain't no trip for kids," Bluey says.

I never saw so much disappointment come over a kid's face. Of

course when he started beggin', Bluey swallowed, stretched his neck and as usual wound up by passin' the buck to me.

"How about it, Windy?"

"You can go," I tells Dick, "but you got to obey orders same as under the sheriff."

I grabbed my reins, turned my stirrup and reached for the horn. As I lit in the saddle, that roan went onto his hind legs in a spin and started after Bluey who had spurred away. He folded his long legs against his lean belly and fair burnt up the earth. I was soon in speakin' distance of Bluey, but he was speechless.

"Kindness sure does a lot for these bullet heads," I calls across.

When we slowed for the first upgrade, Dick caught up with us.

"That roan is a travelin' fool," he yells. "You made a swell trade."

"Maybe," I says, hopeful as I could.

**W**E kept up a swift pace, divin' into canyons, and skimmin' the ridges. We knew there'd be punchers from the other side of the mountain hustlin' Denver Dan on his way, and we wanted to be at Cherry Crick to nab him as he crossed the divide. Soon we could see the hogback that was halfway up Cherry Mountain and reachin' across to Sugar Peak. We flashed down to Cherry Crick and sure enough there was no fresh tracks. We was in time. We stopped to let our horses drink.

I give the roan his head and he jammed it hard between his front feet, went up in the air, unjointed himself and come down with a jar that loosened my back teeth. He changed ends so fast I'd swore the sun was in the south. My saddle cracked like a pistol shot as it lifted

and popped an' I felt daylight whizzin' under me.

"Stay with him, Windy!" yells Dick.

"Choke the horn!" advises Bluey, probably notin' the amount of daylight 'tween me and leather. "Freeze onto the nubbin!"

I was a mile ahead of him on that idea. By main strength I set him another jump, then lost a stirrup. Things happened rapid after that. I bit the dirt with terrific force, continuin' to scoot along after I lit, which wasn't pleasant since most of the time I was on my face. I come to a dead halt against a boulder, and got up boilin' mad.

"Why didn't you scratch him?" Bluey asked. "Was you tryin' kindness on him?"

I ignored that. I marched toward Roany, and he let me up to him without any trouble. I spit on my hands, grabbed the reins and landed back in the saddle. He let me get settled, then his long spine shook with a convulsion, and he flew at it. He went high and crooked and every jump he landed in an opposite direction from which he'd been facin'. The fourth jump loosened me in the saddle and I couldn't get back. I knew I'd overreached myself. The roan was goin' to win another heat. I parted from him just as he started northeast and changed it to southwest. A tree broke my fall, but the branches took off a lot of skin.

I knew I was licked and didn't make no argument when Bluey said he'd be goin' on to collect that reward money. Dick offered to let me take Snipnose, but I didn't have the heart. I never was one for lettin' a kid take the rap for me.

"Things will work out fine," I said to Dick. "When a feller is honest and does the best he can to help reforms, why—"

Bluey snorted.

"Do you mean like a silver lining?" the kid shouts as he spurs after Bluey. "I sure hope one comes."

- I set down on a rock and looked at the roan tryin' to graze through his bit. I was still settin' there when a voice knifed me between the shoulder blades.

"Stick 'em up, high and handsome!"

I recalled my six-gun had been bucked from my holster and hoisted my paws. I turned, not hopin' for much after that voice, and I wasn't disappointed. The face looked like it had been caught 'tween the cook stove and wall and squeezed. A gun was leveled on the string danglin' from my sack of smokin' in my left shirt pocket.

"Mornin', Denver," I says.

"A scalp hunter, huh?" he asks, ugly as sin. "I got a sizable bunch of scalps myself. Yours will look purty danglin' from my belt."

Neither of us was drawn to the other. My hackles lifted and his was already up. He snarled like a hungry wolf and I could see the handle of his gun was notched on top till it looked like a saw. I stiffened my spine and give him eye for eye, but I knew with that smoke iron he had the long end of the argument. It looked like the silver linin' had passed me up.

"You're pretty cocky," says he, "fer an ol' rooster without no spurs!"

"I'm not lowerin' my sights," I says. "You've got a mean eye, but I'm not took in by it. Go ahead and exercise your trigger finger 'fore it gets rheumatiz." Sometimes it helped to get these thin-headed killers seein' red, but it didn't work on Denver. His eyes got ready for the kill. I let my brains out another notch.

"That's a good-lookin' spotted horse you got," I says more friendly.

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"How about tradin' him for my roan?"

He speared a glance toward Roany.

"That geldin' is tough," I went on. "He's got cast-iron lungs and a heart of steel. He could kick dust on any posse that ever bloomed. When he gets them legs to foldin' and unfoldin', he makes lightnin' look like it was staked out to graze." I saw his eyes light, so I tapered off. "I'll trade even."

"Trade!" The word was thin and sharp. His finger tightened on the trigger. "Thanks," he said, "for willin' me such a good horse."

I shoved in my last chip, knowin' time was about to tick out for Windy Bill Wicks. "Jumpin' Jehoshaphat!" I yelled. "I don't want to trade for that spotted horse, at that. I'm a stranger in the country and the posse would take me for you!"

**T**HE idea took, and in a second his brain was blazin' with it. That's what I've noticed about them thin heads, they go off half-cocked. He ordered me to fetch Roany and stood by with leveled gun while I changed his heavy saddlebags onto my saddle. The roan didn't like the weight. I could see him rollin' up the white of his eyes.

The crick was fringed with trees and on ahead to Cherry Mountain was more trees, but back toward Rimrock there was a stretch of valley as exposed as the palm of your hand, endin' in low hills. Denver ordered me to ride for them hills, figurin' that was the most likely way to meet a posse, and, too, he could watch me.

"When a stranger is killed on a spotted horse," he says, laughin', "word will go out that Denver Dan has been caught and the hunt will be called off. I'm even leavin' you

some of the notes that was in the stage strongbox. Get goin'!"

I socked the steel to that spotted horse and struck across the valley. "Windy," I says to myself, "a few more narrow squeaks like that and you'll be an old man."

I pulled Spot to a trot as I nosed him around the first of the hills. Hammer Crick headed five miles up, and cut down for Cherry Crick close to the trail I was ridin'. It was dry now, but in the spring it carried a lot of water and had dug itself a regular canyon across the flat. I planned on follerin' that dry wash back to Cherry, and then workin' down through the trees to see how Denver Dan was comin' with the roan.

My plans was hastened by the nasty buzz of a bullet past my ear. I put Spot for the jump-off into Hammer Crick just as a whole flock of rifles erupted from the hillside. A posse had seen me comin' and got bushed up. Me and Spot lit in the dry wash in a fog of dust.

"Surrender in the name of the law!" yelps a split-tenor voice.

I knew that whinny. It belonged to Shady Mat who dealt for the Marthy in Alkali. The idea of him orderin' anybody to do anything in the name of the law! That posse was probably made up of a bunch of saloon bums out after some reward money. I could of run up a white flag and told them who I was, but then they'd have gone steamin' down to Cherry Crick and spoiled my plans. But I did need a gun.

The chopped-off neigh of a horse comin' around a bend in the wash told me that somebody had clapped a hand on its nose. I picked up a dried piece of wood and began to crawl for the bend where there was some boulders and washed-out holes that made fair shelter. My leg was

stingin' from a nick a bullet had made in it as I was flyin' over the edge of Hammer Crick, and my usual good disposition was gone. I was willin' to take my chances with Denver Dan, but them whiskey kegs cuttin' down on me was runnin' things into the ground. I took a tight hold on my club and crawled up to the bend. When I looked through some brush hangin' from the top, I saw Poo Higgens standin' there holdin' the nose of his horse with his good hand. The other was hangin' blood-soaked at his side.

"Howdy, Poo," I says, makin' a line for his saddle gun. I took the rifle and edged up to the rim of the wash where I cut loose at a couple of hats I saw bobbin' above boulders. I felt better as I slid back.

"Reckon them hats was fair new," I says to Poo, "judgin' from the cussin'!"

Poo had met one of the three hombres that made up Denver's gang and come off second best. He was too weak from his drilled shoulder to want to get into any more fights, but he loaned me one of his short guns. He even let me take his sorrel which was fresher than Spot. He said he'd run up a white flag and tell the saloon-bum posse that it was him they'd stampeded over the edge of the wash, and that way keep them busy till I'd had my go with Denver Dan.

**T**HE wash angled across the flat and run into Cherry Crick a half mile above where I'd left Denver Dan and Roany. I worked down through the trees, hopin' I wouldn't be too late. I wasn't. Cussin' was the first thing I heard, and it was choice. A puncher bogged in the quicksands of the Canadian couldn't 've improved on it. I crawled to a place where I could get a view.

A couple of saddlebags was on the ground and stuff was scattered hither and yon. Denver's face was skinned, his hat gone and most of his shirt. He'd sure made some manful efforts to set that roan. He had his automatic hung at a dead level between the eyes of Roany, but while I was watchin' he lowered it slowly. He didn't dare shoot. The horse was his only chanst to get away.

"Stick 'em up!" I yells.

I give him that one chance to surrender peaceful, but he wasn't lookin' for peace. He hunched to the side and chopped down with the gun already in his hand. The triggerin' was rapid from the start. I've never put myself up 'longside of Bluey in speed matches, but when a feller is reared upon his hind legs fightin' for his life, there just natural ain't no flies on him. When a chunk of lead took me in the side, I most wisht I'd cut down on that killer in cold blood from the brush.

Lead was chokin' the air and the bark of sixes splittin' the ears. I felt the draft of bullets as they passed my cheek, and batted as they zipped in front of me, but I kept that gun of Poo's straight out before me and kickin' like a steer.

I knew my first shot had been a tellin' one, and wondered why that outlaw didn't start givin' up the ghost. Then he began to slump. He shot once from his knees, and again as he rolled over on his side. Then he let go and laid still.

I went over an' heaved his empty gun in the brush, then felt him for an extra. I was kind o' dizzy, so I set down to wait for him to come to. I noticed blood tricklin' down my left leg and soppin' in my boot. Slidin' off the rock where I'd kind o' dropped down, I crawled toward the crick. My shoulder was painin' and makin' my head feel big. Cold water

helped me see through a black cloud that was formin' over the sun, and I managed to get some shells into my gun.

I knew I could hold out, still I was glad when I heard riders a-comin' from Cherry Mountain. It meant Bluey had heard the shootin' and was comin' to investigate. Sheriff Ham Nolan was with him as they whipped round the bend and they was splittin' the breeze at a lively clip.

Denver was just rousin' and he snarled like a caged mountain lion when he saw the star on Ham's shirt. Then he looked at me with a glare that was as hot as a brandin' iron.

"That hōmbre unloaded a roan horse on me," he was pointin' to me. "He got me to trade, then slipped back and bushed me."

Ham looked as if he didn't know whether to believe him. "Windy engaged you in a horse trade?" he gapes.

Dan nodded sullenly.

Bluey was plumb beat out. "If you ever meet Gabriel," he shoots at me, "you'll trade him out o' his horn 'fore he gets to toot it."

While Bluey was fixin' up my wounds, Dick come bustin' around the bend, workin' on Snip with his quirt and his .22 across his lap. He come to a dust-slidin' stop, his eyes buggin'. He was scared when he

saw the blood in my boot, but I told him it wasn't more'n a pin' scratch and that I'd be around in a few days. You could've wiped his eyes off with a saucer when he heard Ham callin' the prisoner Denver.

Ham dressed the outlaw's wounds and loaded him on a horse. The posse had come tearin' over from the hills and even Poo Higgins got there. Poo was mighty relieved that his sorrel horse hadn't been hurt. He said he'd got real worried when the fight busted out. Dick rode back with me and Bluey as we headed for Rimrock.

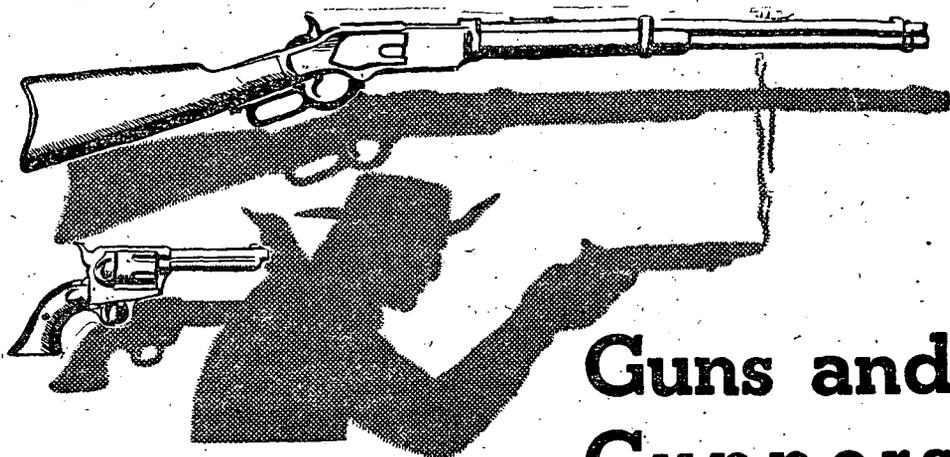
"It sure pays to be for reform movements," the button declared enthusiastically. "You stopped that puncher from beatin' Roany, then Roany bucked Denver off to show you he was grateful. Maybe Mrs. Hip-shot will ask us over for chicken and dumplin's again, because she'll realize more than ever now what a fine citizen you are." He looked at Bluey. "Windy sure is smart, ain't he?"

Bluey nodded, kind o' reluctant. "Anybody," he says, "that can engage an outlaw in a trade when he's only two jumps ahead of a posse, is plenty smart."

"You betcha!" cries Dick and I felt pretty good because I knew he was through admirin' Denver Dan.

THE END.





# Guns and Gunners

By PHIL SHARPE

DURING the past year, inquiries have been running unusually heavy on muzzle-loading guns. This is probably due to the efforts of the National Muzzle-Loading Rifle Association, in sponsoring matches with the old-time rifles. Various shooting clubs have also taken keen interest in this particular type of work.

Generally speaking, unless you really know the subject, it does not pay to attempt to play around with the old muzzle-loaders. Also, do not attempt to shoot them unless you use the proper components plus a gun in good condition. A badly rusted gun should never be used.

If you intend to give that old muzzle-loader a new lease on life, do not attempt to use smokeless powder as the guns were never designed for this type of propellant. Use only black powder or King's semi-smoke-

less, preferably black powder if you can get it. If you wish to use round balls in a .31 caliber rifle, stick to a size suitable to fit the bore.

Measure your charge of powder very carefully and with the butt down and muzzle up, pour in the powder, being sure that none is spilled. If you wish to use a patch over the barrel, try lightly oiled linen cloth. Place this small patch over the muzzle, being careful to center it over the bore. Then place the round ball in the center of the patch and press it down with the thumb until it is flush with the surface. Then with a ramrod, push the ball and patch down slowly and steadily until it contacts the powder.

The following list of literature is available to our readers: STRAIGHT SHOOTING, SNAP SHOOTING, WINCHESTER AMMUNITION HANDBOOK, SAVAGE, STEVENS, FOX, COLT, SMITH & WESSON, HARRINGTON & RICHARDSON, 3c each; MOSSBERG, MARLIN, 2c each; WESTERN AMMUNITION HANDBOOK, 5c; REMINGTON ARMS AND AMMUNITION, 6c; and a large three-pound bundle of assorted catalogs, 30c each and 38c west of Chicago. None can be sent to Canada. Postage stamps are accepted.

Application blanks for membership in the National Rifle Association may be obtained by writing to Mr. Sharpe. Be sure you print your name clearly and inclose a three-cent stamp with your request.