

a breath the stag scoured up wind, carrying a bullet behind his off shoulder.

Tony slipped in another as he ran. He was cursing his clumsiness, and fully prepared to follow through Otago's heart and ribs to the Western Sea if the brute led there.

Tony had the lungs and legs of a musterer, and his second wind found him undistressed. He took knoll and sharp descent and hideous baulking ridge with firm-shut mouth and quivering nostrils.

"I hit! I'll swear I hit. By Jupiter! He's down! Oh, the rotten——" The beast came to his feet again with the hesitation of a new-fired bullet, and Tony put his whole mind-power into his legs.

"If he doesn't jump some beastly river-bed or other, I'm bound to drop him soon or late. A hare runs a half-mile after it's dead. I shouldn't——"

Then over a spur a full hundred chain nearer the stag rose Peyton, who fell on his knee and began pumping lead into the gully after the approved manner of a slayer of men.

The black figure on the knife-edge was like the devil who comes up through a trap-door in "Faust," and Tony cursed it while absolute despair shook him on his feet. For beyond all doubt, the Chimney and all pertaining to it were Peyton's while the pact of the night still held.

Peyton splintered a rock, and pushed in a new clip before he gave chase. But that did not matter. Death had charge of the stag, and when he took the life Peyton would unquestionably take the glory—and the head.

"I can prove it's mine," sobbed Tony, galloping through the shadeless glare. "Peyton uses soft-nosed bullets. I'll show him——" Then he remembered that by his honour he must not prove it.

Peyton had no wind, and Tony closed up rapidly. And the back

view of labouring body was better to him than medicine.

The stag's pace slowed to an uneven trot; but he was four valleys away, making for the bush that led into the unknown.

Down a steep narrow gut Tony drew to the lead. But he ran in cover of matakuri and manuka that Peyton might not see. The quarry was his only if Peyton fell out. And this though he knew of a surety that Peyton had not hit.

Peyton roared up the next rise, and rolled down it. But the stag veered to drink at a crystal basin set in flax marsh below, and the action pricked him forward on an unsteady gait. And at this moment both men would have given all the days of their lives to sit on those mighty branching horns and saw them away from the gleaming neck.

"Plop, plop," went Peyton cheerfully. "Plop. Plop. Plop!"

"Always said those Lyman sights were no good for fast work." Tony was rapidly crawling nearer. "Either that or the fellow can't shoot worth a tinker's benediction. Poor brute! He's water-logged, sure enough. He'll croak 'fore long now."

The end came swiftly. A slip had scored a wide track out of the sheer bush some hundred yards to northward, and on the red clay breast of it the red deer's life left the body with a roar of defiance.

Peyton pawed up to give thanks over what remained, and Tony sat below, loathing all things created, and Peyton in particular. But presently curiosity over-rode pride, and he climbed up to locate the one good shot that had won the game for another.

Peyton was sickeningly bump-tious, and so self-engrossed that he did not ask Tony's business on his beat. He put his finger in the little round hole behind the shoulder, and demanded praise.

"Only had two shots at him," he explained. "And this one that