

**BLUE PETE,
HALF BREED**

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Blue Pete, half breed by Luke Allan

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LUKE ALLAN

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By
LUKE ALLAN

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BLUE PETER: HALF BREED

CHAPTER I

THE COMING OF BLUE PETE

SUNSHINE everywhere, brittle, unclouded, relentless — a glare that, to the very horizon, saturated and palled and blinded. Heat that withered what it touched streamed upward like a wave from the prairie, as well as downward from the dazzling canopy overhead. Not a breath stirred dead yellow grass or sage bush; and the half hidden carpet of prairie flowers — even the softer saffron of the cactus bloom — only reflected the blinding flame of sunlight.

One spot only of moving life was visible: a man, tall and straight, astride a black horse, both fighting grimly the pervading limpness, both preserving something of the air of authority and vigilance that never quite deserts the Mounted Police.

Constable Mahon sat loosely in the saddle, staring vacantly before him, but now and then his head raised, with the untiring instinct of the Force, to search the stretches about, and a tiny furrow

came and went between his eyes. After a time the uncanny silence beat in on him, accustomed though he was to every phase of prairie life, and rising in his saddle he peered off to the west where he knew large herds fed, his quick eye picking out on the slope of a depression the small dark objects that told of cattle too languid even to follow into the cooler depths of the coulees their thousands of companions now sleeping through the mid-day heat. Smiling with the frankness of expression that comes to men who live much alone, he chirruped to his horse and struck off more briskly toward the south.

With an unconscious movement of the hand that guided without pulling the rein he slanted off toward a long deep-green line that tempered the sky to the south-east, and half an hour later the Cypress Hills towered over him, a range of verdant heights that stood incongruous in the surrounding levels, their western end falling away before him in a sudden sweep of half-clad hillside — as indeed the borders of the Hills everywhere dropped strangely into the prairie.

As he pulled up before a long coulee that dived into the trees, he forgot the blazing heat. For several minutes he sat, his hands resting on the pommel, gazing keenly along the edges of the Hills, searching out every shadow and nook. But the Cypress Hills were as dead to the eye

as the trail behind him, and Mars, his horse, turned at last to whinny softly its impatience.

"If we only knew half your secrets!" the Policeman exclaimed aloud into the black shadows, and gathering up the reins loped westward to skirt the incline.

From one of the rolling ridges a straggling herd of long horned cattle on the slopes of a watered valley came into view. Years ago their ancestors had been trailed north from Texas, and the beautiful horns were handed down to a vast progeny that gave one of the fanciful touches to the prairie life with which Mahon was in daily contact, adding a little of the variety of outside world for which something within him seemed always to be craving.

A quartet of drowsy cowboys, two of them playing cards, lolled in the grass, their ponies drooping with loose rein in the thin shadow of nearby bushes. One looked lazily up and waved his hand, and Mahon responded, noticing with deepening frown that they ceased their game to watch him. And when, moved by a sudden impulse, he jerked his reins as if to join them, the two who were not playing rose and slouched to their ponies.

With an impatient twist of his arm he turned away. "I don't believe it," he muttered.

Mile after mile of the dead grass of years sped