



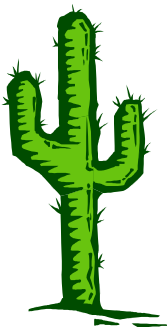
The Fastest Pen In The West

by Adam Jacobs

Most medical writers, if asked how old their profession is, would probably say something between 10 and 20 years. In fact, medical writers have been around for much longer than most of us would have thought, as this recently discovered tale from the Wild West proves...

'Twas a moonlit night in a frontier town,
Where a man sat in the bar-room with a
solemn frown.
He came in every evening, 'bout seven
o'clock,
And all the folks there just called him 'The
Doc'.
Now the Doc was a medical man, as you've
guessed;
The folks in the town said he was the best.
If ever any of them got taken sick,
The Doc got them back on their feet mighty
quick.
But tonight he was troubled, as all folks could
tell:
The look on his face showed all was not well.
His friends could see clearly, he looked kinda
sad,
Then one of them said: 'Tell us, Doc, what's
so bad?'
'Well folks,' he said, 'it's like this, you see,
Tomorrow the Quinton gang's coming for me.
I guess you all know how that bunch of louts
Are bad news for medical men hereabouts,
And it's no secret that the plain fact is
They want to bust in and take over my
practice.
They've taken twelve others this month, I've
heard tell,
And they turn real nasty if you don't want to
sell.'
'But Doc,' someone said, 'It's well known
round here
You're a mighty fine shot; you've got nothing
to fear!
If you stand and fight, like I know you can do,
Those Quinton boys will be no match for you.'
'That's true', said the Doc, 'I sure can't deny,
That folks who cross me generally die.

But I just don't have time to go out fighting,
'Cos I'm laden down with piles of writing.
There's patients' notes I've got to do,
And then there's my study report too:
*A randomised investigation
Of treating pain and inflammation
At gunshot wounds, where the bullet went in,
By cleaning with either whisky or gin.*
It's taken three years to get all the data;
I just can't put it off till later.'
Just then the saloon doors flew open wide,
And a tall, handsome stranger walked inside.
His clothes were new, and his face was clean;
He looked mighty strong, and kinda mean.
The room fell silent then and there,
And everyone just turned to stare
As this man, who'd ridden here from afar,
Slowly but surely walked up to the bar.
'Whisky' he said, 'and make sure it's the best.'
'Sure will', said the barman, 'you just sit there
and rest.'
As he poured out the drink, he ventured to
say:
'You're new in town, aren't you, just rode in
today?'
'That's right' said the stranger 'and it's been a
long ride:
Five days on the trail, five nights camped
outside.
And I rode all the way at a heck of a pace
'Cos I'm looking for work; I've heard here's a
good place.'
'There's plenty of work in this town, that's for
sure,
But what kind of work are you looking for?
Do you work with cattle, or are you a gun-
fighter?'
'No sir', said the stranger, 'I'm a medical
writer.



The Write Stuff

The Fastest Pen in the West

In fact', said he, 'I'm one of the best:
They call me The Fastest Pen In The West.'
Now the Doc had been sitting not so far away,
And he'd heard every word that the stranger
did say.
He knew this could be a way out of his
trouble,
But he'd have to act fast, right now, on the
double.
'Howdy, stranger' said the Doc, as he got to
his feet,
'You look like a man I'm sure glad to meet.
I'll buy you a whisky, if you agree.
Set 'em up, barman; leave the bottle with me!'
'That's mighty kind', said the stranger, 'don't
mind if I do.
Be a pleasure taking a drink with you.
If the whisky's on you, then I'll listen all day,
To whatever it is you've got to say.'
'Well', said the Doc, 'now here's my position:
I've got a business proposition.
It just so happens that I have a need
For a medical writer with a turn of speed.
I've got piles of reports that all need writing,
So I can have time to go out gun-fighting.'
'Well sure', said the stranger 'here's an end to
your sorrow:
I'll start your reports at sun-up tomorrow.
I don't think they'll be any trouble to me,
That is, if you can afford my fee.'
'Sure can,' said the Doc, 'here's this for a
start:
When you've finished the job I'll pay the next
part.
It's a fair enough price, or so I've been told.'
Then he handed the stranger a small bag of
gold.
'Well, that'll do nicely', the stranger replied,
'It's good to get paid before the ink's dried.

There's some folks I've dealt with, I don't
mind saying,
Who take several months to get round to
paying.
And then, there's even some folks who
Have the nerve to take off bank charges, too.'
So the very next morning, he got down to
work,
With both pens blazing; he sure didn't shirk,
While the Doc, with a couple of good men and
true,
Set out to do what that man had to do.
Well, the Quinton boys came riding by soon
enough,
But the Doc was ready, and he sure was
tough.
Once he'd finished with those evil men,
They never bothered him ever again.
By sun-down, the Doc was out of his danger,
And he went along to see the stranger.
When he got there, the sight that met his eye
Was a stack of paper, 'bout six feet high.
'Well', said the Doc, 'I'm mighty impressed:
You sure must be The Fastest Pen In The
West.
I'll pay you the rest of your fee right away,
But have you considered how long you might
stay?
A talent like yours ain't often seen twice:
You could work here full-time, you just name
your price.'
'Well Doc, your offer sure is mighty fine,
But I'm afraid that I'm going to have to
decline.
Though it's been kinda fun working with you,
There's other folks out there who need me,
too.
So I'll say goodbye now my work here is
done.'
And he rode away into the setting sun.



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