

ROBBE'S
ROOST
P 22

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C Collier's

THE NATIONAL

KLY

THEATRE

Hugh MacNaïr Kahler
Winston Churchill
Knute K. Rockne
Jerome Beatty
Zane Grey



ADOLPH
TREDER





Next Week

"FIVE times, no less, in one afternoon this amazing man shook hands with me, Pancho. And for what? Because the roses were good that day." The amazing man was Dwight Whitney Morrow and Pancho was the gardener at the Morrow home at Cuernavaca in Mexico. Pancho believes that Mr. Morrow will one day rule the world, and he is not the only Mexican to hold that belief, for the ex-ambassador, in addition to performing one of the most difficult diplomatic feats in the world, has captivated the heart of a nation. We sent Walter Davenport to Mexico to find out just how he had done it. Next week Mr. Davenport will give you a picture of this simple business man who shocked the embassy by his informality and created international understanding and good will by ignoring red tape. The article is called "With Morrow in Mexico."



WHEN Boadicea Mulligan ran off with the Lady Jane Grey dress from Clinton's Fifth Avenue store, where she worked, and decided to go to the Beaux-Arts ball she was following the counsels of despair. "After this," she said, "the deluge." But the chance was too good to miss—if only to get even with Miss Penelope Crosbie, who looked like a string of tomatoes and held the world's record for boredom. If she had known whom she was going to meet she would certainly not have dared go. But then what she would have missed! Richard Connell tells you just what in "The Duchess of Yorkville."

SLAGLE of Princeton had just nailed S Crowley, star runner of the Four Horsemen. Between halves Crowley was apologetic. "I made a mistake," he told Coach Rockne. "I didn't know Slagle was that fast. I should have cut back."

"That wasn't the mistake you made," Rockne replied. "Slagle didn't know who you were. If you had shown him those clippings you've been saving, telling how good you are, he wouldn't have dared come near you." That's just one incident in the career of the most famous combination in football history. Knute Rockne tells you about them in "The Four Horsemen."

TO THOSE who think the racketeers are allowed to ply their trade unopposed on our Atlantic seaboard we are happy to introduce Angelo Loscaccio. He was very much opposed. There probably never was a more opposed racketeer than The Angel. Sam Hubbard did the opposing. Sam's family had lived at Hubbard's Cove for two hundred and fifty years. And so when The Angel suggested that Sam resign his business—and his wife—it was natural that there should be trouble. Don Marquis has described the battle that ensued. It merely strengthened Sam's belief that racketeers are "Not the Nicest People."

THERE will be stories and articles by Murney Mintzer, John B. Kennedy and Grantland Rice; and serials by Zane Grey and P. G. Wodehouse.

Collier's

THE NATIONAL WEEKLY

THIS WEEK

October 25, 1930

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Any Week

WE HEAR rousing cheers for the current Wodehouse novel, "Big Money." Mr. Wm. B. Watkins, of Baltimore, thinks a national holiday should be declared because of it, and Mrs. Paul Muller, of New York, enjoys it even though, in the first sentence, we spelled labor without a "u."

But for Mrs. Rose Andis, of Kenosha, Wisconsin, we have only deep sympathy. Mrs. Andis likes our serials but not the feeling of suspense that grips her heart when she contemplates the terrible jam the heroine, or hero, is in. How can justice and virtue be served in six or seven short weeks, she wonders, and opens each issue with trembling fingers fearful lest some new calamity befall her favorites.

Dear Mrs. Andis! That awful fascination you acknowledge brings only joy to the hardened hearts of Arthur Somers Roche, Peter B. Kyne and Kathleen Norris. Your sacrifice sweetens their lives and ours. May your tribe increase and may you, by some method which your ingenuity will discover, catch up on back sleep.

FIRST prize for "downright rot, bunk and asinine imbecility" is awarded us by Dr. B. C. Abernathy, of Sondheim, Louisiana. It was our editorial "Time to Buy" that moved the doctor to write. Even so, we came off a great deal better than Mr. Hoover did, not that Mr. Hoover had anything to do with the editorial. He is on the doctor's mind and probably gets into most of his letters and, on bad days, prescriptions. "Misfit, opportunist, political truckler, issue-straddler, commission-apointer and Negro-lover," cries the doctor, warming up, and goes on from there.

If Charlie Michelson, who runs the Democratic publicity office, needs a good, enthusiastic name-caller, he can write to Doctor Abernathy.

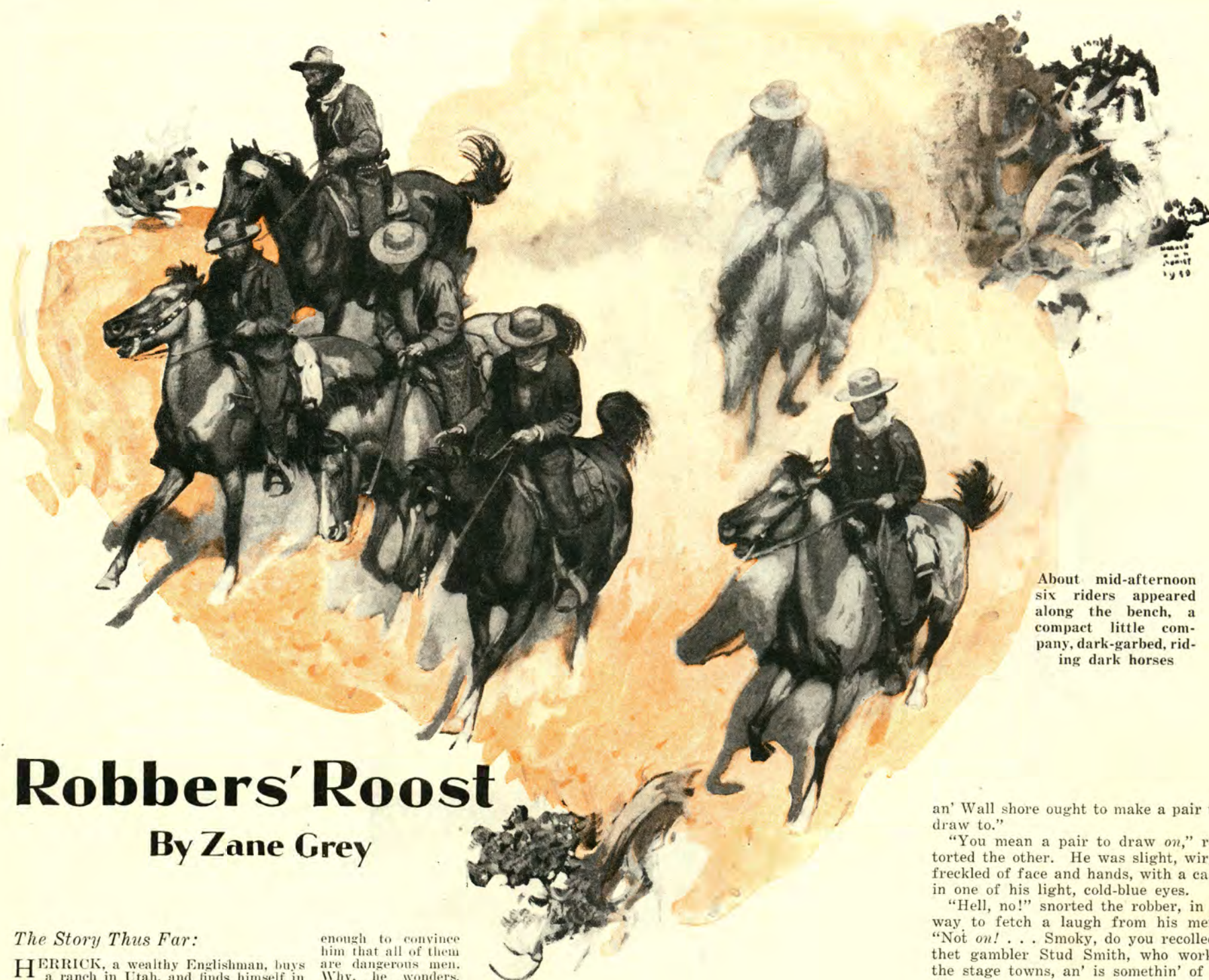


A FEW days ago Owen White appeared in the office wearing a well-fed appearance in the neighborhood of his gun belt. "Where have you been?" we demanded.

"Aw, nowhere. Just eating lunch down at the Bankers Club."

That needed explaining, of course, and after much heckling we got the story. Some time ago Mr. White wrote a yarn about Captain Jack Hays of the Texas Rangers. Immediately after publication he received an invitation from the captain's grandson to have lunch with him. Not knowing how much animosity he might be cherishing for what had been written about his belligerent ancestor, Mr. White considered for some time before he accepted. He is now glad he did so. Mr. John Coffee Hays, grandson of the Texas Ranger, is one of the department heads of the Stone & Webster Engineering Corporation. "Everything you wrote about my grandfather is true," he told Owen, "but you could have gone a little farther. You could have said that before he died Captain Jack Hays owned practically the entire site of the present city of Oakland, California; that he laid out the town, and that he also donated to the city its very numerous parks and also the sites on which some of its important public buildings are located."

Mr. White, amazed, ate two desserts.



About mid-afternoon six riders appeared along the bench, a compact little company, dark-garbed, riding dark horses

Robbers' Roost

By Zane Grey

The Story Thus Far:

HERRICK, a wealthy Englishman, buys a ranch in Utah, and finds himself in a nest of cattle rustlers and gunmen. To insure himself against robbery and other outrages, he tries a novel experiment: he hires the desperadoes!

Among the new employees are Hank Hays and one Heeseman, dead shots and bitter enemies. Herrick makes the former his superintendent.

While riding near the town of Green River, Hays meets a mysterious young stranger, who gives his name as "Jim Wall" (which it, obviously, is not) and confides that he has fled from Wyoming, where he is wanted—on various charges.

The two ride together, and Hays is delighted when, having boldly held up a casual acquaintance, he notes that the young man is not shocked, but merely amused.

Convinced that Wall is both unscrupulous and game, Hays informs him, guardedly, that he is planning to rob Herrick on a gigantic scale when the opportune moment arrives. He then invites the newcomer to join his gang.

Wall is not a cattle-rustler; he has never been guilty of stock-stealing. But, being penniless and in need of a job, he accepts the invitation; and almost at once he has a chance to prove his mettle.

In Green River, Hays becomes engaged in an altercation with one "Stud," a card-shark. Heated words are exchanged, and a tense moment finally arrives when it looks as though the gambler—who is amazingly quick on the draw—is on the verge of shooting Hays. Then, to the surprise of the on-lookers, Wall steps forward. With the utmost coolness he accuses the gambler of cheating and dares him to fight.

Stud, thoroughly bluffed, does not draw; and those who witness the drama realize that the man from Wyoming is what he appears to be: a fighter.

A trying horseback journey to Herrick's ranch follows.

Arrived, Wall notes the border-hawks with whom he is to work. One glance is

enough to convince him that all of them are dangerous men. Why, he wonders, was Herrick ever so foolish as to hire them? And why did the Englishman deliberately pick Hays as his right-hand man?

What a strange fellow, Hays! As Wall goes to sleep that night he reviews all his new boss' actions. The fellow has courage of a sort. But when a real test comes can he be trusted? Wall resolves to take no chances.

III

NOT until the following morning did Jim Wall get a satisfactory scrutiny of the four members of Hays' outfit.

His first impression was that not one of them had ever been a cowman, which gave their presence there such incongruity. Nor would any of them ever see their thirtieth year again.

Before breakfast, at the table, and afterward, out on the porch, it was give and take between Wall and this quartet. His lot had never been cast with just such men, but he knew how to meet them.

The eldest, who answered to the name of Mac, was a cadaverous-faced man, with a clammy skin and eyes like a ghoul. He was always twisting and squeezing his hands, lean, sinewy, strong members.

"Whar you from?" he had asked Wall.

"Wyoming, last," replied Jim, agreeably.

"An' before thet, Texas, I'll gamble."

"Funny how I'm taken for a Texan, for I'm not. I never was in that state."

"Not funny at all," replied the other, with a laugh. "Leastways not to Smoky hyar. Haw! Haw! You shore have the look of a Texan."

"Hope that's not against me here in Utah."

"Jest contrary, I'd say," rejoined Mac.

Jeff Bridges, a sturdy, tow-headed man of forty or thereabouts, probably once had been a farmer or a villager. He had a bluff, hearty manner and seemed not to pry under the surface.

"Glad Hank took you on," he said. "We need one cattleman in this outfit, an' thet's no joke."

Sparrowhawk Latimer, the third of the four, greatly resembled a horse thief Wall had once seen hanged—the same beaked nose, the same small, sleek head, the same gimlet eyes of steel.

"Jim Wall, eh, from the Wind River country," he said. "Been through thar, years ago. Must be populated now. It wasn't a healthy place then."

"Lots of ranchers, riders—and sheriffs," returned Jim, easily. "That's why I rode on."

"Wal, them articles is scarce hyar. Utah is wild yet, except over east in the Mormon valleys."

Hays had said to Slocum, the fourth member of this quartet: "Smoky, you

an' Wall shore ought to make a pair to draw to."

"You mean a pair to draw on," retorted the other. He was slight, wiry, freckled of face and hands, with a cast in one of his light, cold-blue eyes.

"Hell, no!" snorted the robber, in a way to fetch a laugh from his men. "Not on! . . . Smoky, do you recollect thet gambler Stud Smith, who works the stage towns, an' is somethin' of a gun-slinger?"

"I ain't forgot him."

"Wal, we set in a poker game with him one night. I was lucky. Stud took his losin' to heart, an' he shore tried to pick a fight. First he was goin' to draw on me, then shifted to Jim. An' damn if Jim didn't bluff him out of throwin' a gun."

"How?"

"Jim just said for Stud not to draw, as there wasn't a man livin' who could set at a table an' beat him to a gun."

"Most obligin' an' kind of you, Wall," remarked Smoky, with sarcasm, as he looked Jim over with unsatisfied eyes. "If you was so all-fired certain of thet, why'd you tip him off?"

"I never shoot a man just because the chance offers," rejoined Jim, coldly.

THERE was a subtle intimation in this, probably not lost upon Slocum. The greatest of gunmen were quiet, soft-spoken, sober individuals who never sought quarrels. They were few in number, compared to the various types of would-be killers met with on the ranges and in the border towns. Jim knew that his reply would make an enemy, even if Slocum were not instinctively one on sight. There was no help for these things, and self-preservation lay solely in being able to instill doubt and fear. Respect could scarcely be felt by men like Slocum. Like a weasel he sniffed around Jim.

"You don't, eh?" he queried. "Wal, I work on the opposite principle. Reckon I'll live longer. . . . Wal, you strike me unfavorable."

"Thanks for being honest, if not complimentary," returned Jim. "I can't strike everybody favorably, that's sure."

Hays swore at his lieutenant: "Unfavorable, huh? Now why the hell do you have to pop up with a dislike for him?"

"I didn't say it was dislike. Just unfavorable. No offense meant."

"Smoky," said Hays, "I won't have no grudges in this outfit. I've got the biggest deal on I ever worked out. There's got to be harmony among us."

"Hank, you're in your dotage. Harmony among a bunch of grown men, all hard, bitter, defeated outlaws? Bah!"

"Smoky, because you're an outlaw doesn't make me one, or Happy or Brad or Mac, or any other of us, unless Jim here. He hasn't confided in me yet."

"I'm no outlaw," declared Jim, coolly.

"It's a little matter thet'll soon be corrected. This Englishman has money enough to fetch the law out on this border. There's your mistake, Hank. I've been agin this deal an' I'll stay agin it."

"Same here," interposed Lincoln.

"WAL, we don't agree," said Hays, calmly. "An' thet's nothin'. But Smoky bobbin' up agin my new man—thet's serious. Now let's lay the cards on the table. . . . Jim, do you want to declare yourself?"

"I'm willing to answer questions—unless they get nasty," replied Jim, frankly. He had anticipated some such circumstance as this, and really welcomed it.

"Will you tell the truth?" queried Slocum, bluntly.

"I'll agree to—if I answer at all," rejoined Jim slowly. "Shoot away."

"You got run out of Wyomin'?"

"No. But if I'd stayed on I'd probably stretched hemp."

"Rustlin'?"

"No."

"Hoss-stealin'? Thet hoss of yours is worth stealin'."

"No."

"Hold up a stage or somebody?"

"No. Once I helped hold up a bank. That was years ago."

"Bank robber! You're out of our class, Jim."

"Hardly that. It was my first and only crack at a bank. Two of us got away. Then we held up a train—blew open the safe in the express car."

"What'd you get?" queried Slocum, with an intense interest which was reflected in the faces of his comrades.

"Not much. Only sixty thousand dollars in gold. It was hard to pack away."

Smoky's low whistle attested to his admiration, if no more. The others stood spellbound. Mac rubbed his suggestive hands together.

Jim turned to them: "That, gentlemen, is the extent of my experience as a robber. I was never caught, but the thing dogged. Still I don't want to give the impression I left Wyoming on that account. As a matter of fact, both deals were pulled off in Iowa. Something personal made Wyoming too hot for me."

"Women!" grinned Hays, his face lighting.

"No."

"Guns?" flashed Slocum, penetratingly.

Jim laughed. "One gun, anyhow."

They all laughed. The tension seemed released.

"Smoky, I call it square of Wall," spoke up Hays. "He shore didn't need to come clean as thet."

"It's all right," agreed Slocum, as if forced to fair judgment.

Hays plumped off the porch rail with boots ringing his relief and satisfac-

tion. "Now, fellers, we can get to work. Herrick puts a lot of things up to me, an' I ain't no cattleman. Jim, do you know the cattle game?"

"From A to Z," smiled Wall.

"Say, but I'm in luck. We'll run the ranch now. Who's been boss since I left?"

"Herrick. An' thet shore made Heese-man an' his outfit sore. There's trouble brewin' with him, Hank. We got to get rid of him an' his pards before we can pull any deals."

"Listen, I've only one deal in mind," replied Hays powerfully. "Thet'll take time."

"How much time?" queried Lincoln.

"I don't know. Ought to have a couple of months. . . . Shore Heese-man sticks in my craw. We'll have a pow-wow tonight. I'll go see the boss. Rest of you get to work. Haw! Haw!"

"What'll I do, Hank?" asked Jim.

"Wal, you look the whole diggin's over."

JIM lost no time in complying with his first order from the superintendent of Star Ranch. What a monstrous and incredible hoax was being perpetrated upon some foreigner! Jim had no sympathy for him. He was just curious.

Evidently there had been ranchers here in this valley before Herrick. Old log cabins and corrals adjoining the new ones attested to this. The barns, the pastures, the pens teemed with ranch life. Jim did not recall ever having heard so much of a clamor. Burros were braying all over the place; horses whistled and neighed; turkeys gobbled, pigs squealed, roosters crowed, sheep baaed—it was certainly a farm scene, and, despite the overcrowding, the disproportion to the natural effects of a normal ranch, it was colorful, bustling, thrilling in the extreme.

He would have been willing to wager something that no Westerner had ever seen a barn like the one newly erected. Jim did not know whether to proclaim it a monstrosity or a wonderfully new and utilitarian structure. Probably it was English in design. If Herrick did not mind expense this sort of improvement was all right. There were fences new and puzzling to Jim, as in fact were all the peeled-log constructions.

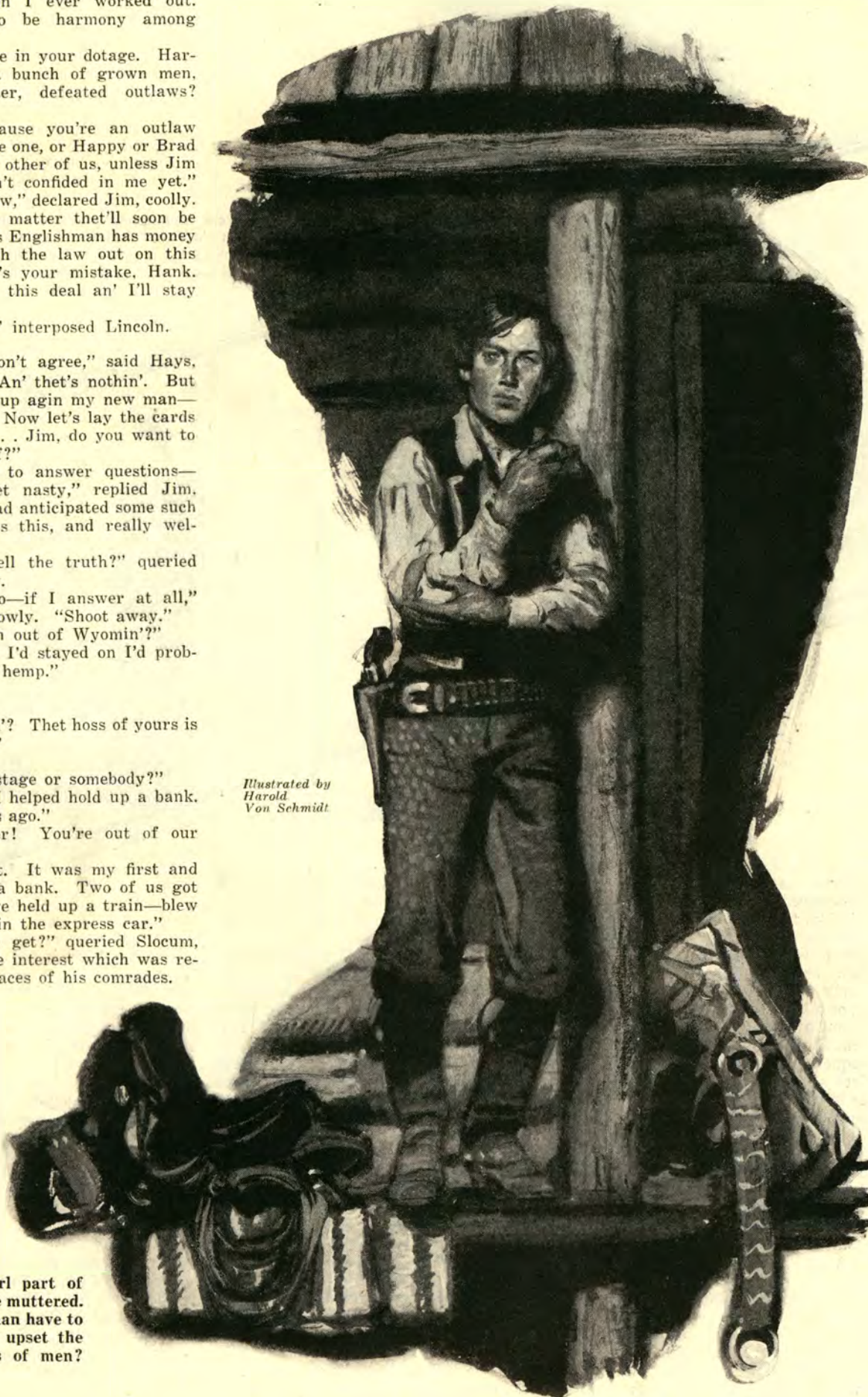
JIM passed cowboys with only a word or a nod. He could get along with that breed, here or anywhere, because he had developed his own range life with them. He made unobtrusive effort to espy ranch hands of another type—that which was giving Hays concern. He talked with a stableboy who proved easy to make friends with, and to an old man who said he had owned a homestead across the valley, one of those Herrick had gathered in.

Jim gleaned information from this rancher. Herrick had bought out all the cattlemen in the valley, and on round the foothill line to Limestone Springs, where the big X Bar outfit began. Riders for these small ranches had gone to work for Herrick. They were Mormons. Jim concluded this was a desirable state of affairs, because it might account for the natural antagonism sure to arise between the real cowboys and the older employees of uncertain vocation. He was told, presently, that Heese-man, with ten men, was out on the range.

Presently Jim encountered Hays, accompanied by a tall, floridly blond man, garbed as no Westerner had ever been. This, of course, must be the Englishman. He was young, hardly over thirty, and handsome in a fleshy way.

"Mr. Herrick, this is my new hand I was tellin' you about," announced Hays, glibly. He was absolutely shining of eye and face. "Jim Wall, late

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Illustrated by
Harold
Von Schmidt

"Damn the girl part of it, anyhow!" he muttered. Why did a woman have to come along to upset the best-laid plans of men?

Robbers' Roost

Continued from page 23

of Wyomin'. . . Jim, meet the boss." "How do you do, Mr. Wall," returned Herrick, extending his hand, which Jim took with a bow and a word of acknowledgment. "Hays has been singing your praises. I understand you've had wide experience on ranches?"

"Yes, sir. I've been riding the range since I was a boy," replied Jim, aware of being taken in by intelligent blue eyes.

"Hays has suggested making you his foreman."

"That is satisfactory to me."

"You are better educated than these other men. It will be part of your duties to keep my books. I'm in a bloody mess as to figures."

"MR. HERRICK, if you haven't kept track of purchases, cattle, supplies, wages—all that sort of thing—it won't be easy to straighten it all out. I've tackled that job before."

"So I was tellin' the boss," interposed Hays. "But I'm shore, Jim, you're equal to thet."

"As I understand ranching," went on Herrick, "a foreman handles the riders. Now as this ranching game is strange to me I'm glad to have a foreman of experience. I was advised in Salt Lake City and at Grand Junction not to go in for cattle raising out in this section. The claim was that the Henry Mountains were a rendezvous for several bands of steer thieves. That fact has been verified here by the ranchers from whom I bought land and cattle."

"My idea then was to hire some gunmen along with the cowboys. Hays' name was given me at Grand Junction as the hardest nut in eastern Utah. Not so flattering to Mr. Hays, by Jove, but eminently satisfactory to me. So eventually my offer reached Hays and he consented to work for me, in the capacity, you understand, of buffer between me and these cow stealers. It got noised about, I presume, for other men with reputations calculated to intimidate thieves applied to me. I took on Heeseman and his friends. . . . Would you be good enough to give me your opinion, Wall?"

"It's not an original idea at all, Mr. Herrick," responded Jim, frankly, seeing the impression he was making on the Englishman. "That has been done before, in some cases, even to the setting of a thief to catch a thief. Its value lies in the fact that it works. But you really did not need to go to the expense—and risk, I might add—of hiring Heeseman's outfit."

"Expense is no object. Risk, however—what do you mean by risk?"

"Between ourselves, I strongly suspect that Heeseman is a rustler and head of the biggest Henry Mountain gang."

"By Jove! You don't say? This is ripping. Heeseman said the identical thing about Hays."

Jim was on the lookout for that very thing.

"Hays will kill Heeseman for that," retorted Jim, curtly. "But of course not while he's in your employ. . . . If you go over to Green River, to Moab, and towns to the east you will hear that Hays is absolutely not a rustler."

"I took Hays at his word," replied the Englishman. "Heeseman did not impress me. It's rather a muddle."

"Wal, Mr. Herrick, don't you worry none," interposed Hays, suavely. "Shore I don't take kind to what Heeseman called me to your face, but I can overlook it for the present. Just let Heeseman ride on till he piles up. Then it

won't be our fault, an' whatever blood-spillin' comes of it can't be laid to you. Besides so long as you hire his outfit you'll be savin' money. Jim had it figured wrong about expense. You see, if Heeseman was workin' for you he can't rustle as many cattle as if he wasn't."

"Meanwhile we will be learning the ropes," put in Jim. "Such a big outfit as this needs adjustment. You oughtn't to sell a steer this summer."

"Sell? I'm buying cattle now."

"Thet makes our job easier," returned Hays, with veracity. "Anythin' come of that deal you had on with thet Grand Junction outfit?"

"Yes. I received their reply the other day," rejoined Herrick. "We'll have to send a letter to Grand Junction to close the transaction. . . . By Jove, that reminds me. I had word from my sister, Helen. It came from St. Louis. She is coming through Denver and will arrive at Grand Junction about the fifteenth."

"Aw, yes, I recollect—a sister comin' out," replied Hays, constrainedly.

"Young girl—if I may ask?" added Jim, haltingly.

"Young woman. Helen is twenty-two."

"Comin' for a little visit?" asked Hays.

"By Jove, it bids fair to be a lifelong one," declared Herrick, as if pleased. "She wants to make Star Ranch her home. Friends of ours ranching in it in Colorado were instrumental in my traveling out here. Helen and I are alone—except for distant relatives. We are devoted to each other. If she can stick it out in this bush I'll be jolly glad."

"Ahuh," replied Hays, without his former radiance. "Utah ain't so good a place for a young woman."

"How so? By Jove, she will love it. And it's conceivable she'll turn Star Ranch on end."

"I reckon any good-lookin' girl would do thet, Mr. Herrick," said Hays, resignedly. "But Jim an' me here—we only guarantee to handle rustlers."

"By Jove, you'll have to handle these Mormon cowboys, too," laughed Herrick. "Can you drive from Grand Junction in one day?"

"Shore. Easy with a buckboard an' a good team," replied Hays.

Jim Wall sustained his first slight reaction of dismay.

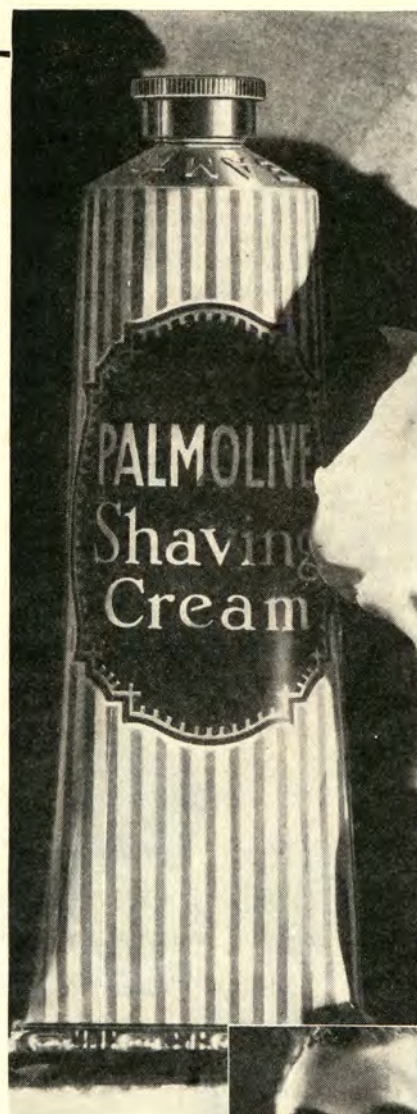
Their colloquy was interrupted by cowboys driving a string of heifers through the yard before the stable. And when they had passed, Herrick resumed his walk with Hays, leaving Jim to his own devices.

JIM strolled around the corrals, the sheds, down the lane between the pastures, out to the open range, where for miles the gray was spotted with cattle, and back to the blacksmith shop. Here he scraped acquaintance with the smith, who proved to be a genial fellow named Crocker. He was another of the homesteaders Herrick had bought out, but he was not a Mormon. Manifestly he and his farming associates had been bewildered by the onslaught of the Englishman upon their peaceful valley, and were frankly far the richer for it.

From the smithy Jim gravitated up the winding road to the top of the bench, where the rambling, yellow ranch-house, so new he smelled the rosin from the peeled logs, and the stately pines, and especially the view down the valley, wrought in him a feeling he sel-

(Continued on page 64)

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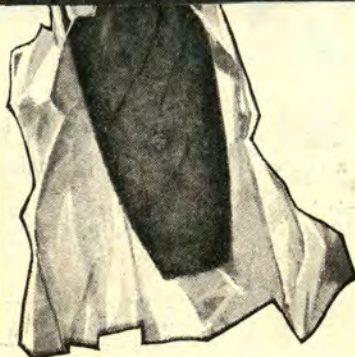
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(Continued from page 63)

dom experienced—envy. How inconceivably good to own such a place—to have a home—to be able to gaze down the trails without keen eyes alert for riders inimical to life, and to revel in the far-flung curves and spurs and deeps of the desert! It was something Jim Wall could never know. His lot did not lie in the pleasant lanes of life.

This Englishman's sister—this Helen Herrick—she would be coming to a remote, wild and beautiful valley that any healthy-minded girl would love. But whatever the joy of reunion with her brother and the thrill of such unfettered life in the West, such a visit could only end in tragedy. Jim did not like the idea. A woman, especially a handsome one, always made trouble for men, though on the moment Jim was thinking only of her. What queer people the English! He remembered a gambler at Abilene, an immaculate, black-frocked, white-vested Englishman who frequented the dives of that frontier cattle town. He had been the coldest, nerviest proposition Jim had stacked up against. This Herrick had something of the same look, only one of pride and position instead of disgrace and ruin. What would the girl be like? Twenty-two years old, strong, a horse-woman, and handsome—very likely blond, as was her brother! And Jim made a mental calculation of the ruffians in Herrick's employ. Eighteen! More, for including himself there were nineteen.

HE SEEMED to feel disgust at the prospect of his being party to the misfortune of a young woman. But here, as in so many instances of recent years, he found discontent in the very things he might have avoided. Why rail at circumstance? Hank Hays had befriended him, even if his aim was selfish. Beggars could not be choosers. A robber should not be squeamish, and he, for one, could not be treacherous. Still—

He strode on and let action change

the current of his thought. Avoiding another long gaze at the vast expanse, exquisitely clear in the rarefied atmosphere, he found a precipitous path down to the level, whence he made his way back to Hays' cabin, satisfied yet dissatisfied with the morning.

JIM passed the afternoon astride his horse, familiarizing himself with the valley adjacent to the ranch-house.

Riding through the sage was a pleasure to which he had not treated himself for a long while. It added to his growing conception of Star Ranch.

On the way in he passed Heeseman's camp, a group of soiled tents and a chuck-wagon, situated on the opposite side of the bench from that of Hays', and farther back. The bench was stony there and unscalable. A road passed the camp, heading straight for the notch in the valley, and the pass between these two spurs of the Henrys. This was the main road to Grand Junction, a long fifty miles distant.

Jim halted to pass the time of day with the cook, a burly fellow busy at the shelf end of his wagon.

"Howdy. Is this Heeseman's outfit?" asked Jim, civilly.

"Howdy yourself. Git down an' come in," replied the man, taking stock of Jim. "The boss hasn't rid in yet."

"Then I won't wait. About grub time over at Hays' cabin. Will you tell Heeseman I left my respects? Jim Wall, late of Wyoming."

"Jim Wall, huh? Sure, I'll tell him. It's more'n any other of Hays' outfit has done," replied the cook, gruffly.

"They're an unsociable bunch. We're not that way in Wyoming."

Jim rode on back through the barnyards, meeting lean-faced riders, mere boys in years, who eyed him askance and whispered among themselves. Upon arriving at the corral near Hays' cabin he unsaddled and turned Bay loose with the other horses there. He left his saddle, too, but took his rifle.

Hays greeted him from the porch bench, where he sat among several of his men.



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"Where you been, Jim? Gettin' the lay of the land?"

"Just taking 'heap look' round, as an Indian would say. Stopped to say hello to Heeseman, but he wasn't in camp."

"Wal, there's nothing wrong with your nerve, Jim. I've just been tellin' Brad an' Sparrowhawk here how favorable you hit the boss."

"Come an' get it before I throw it out for the other hawks!" yelled Happy Jack cheerfully from within.

After supper Hays leaned back and surveyed the company. "Fellers, we've a pow-wow on hand. Clear the table. Fetch another lamp. We'll lay out the cards an' some coin, so we can pretend to be settin' in a little game if anybody happens along. But the game we're really settin' in is the biggest ever dealt in Utah."

SO IT came to pass that Jim Wall sat down with a crew of robbers to plot the ruin of a rich and eccentric rancher. "Talk low, everybody," instructed Hays. "An' one of you step out on the porch now an' then. Heeseman might be slick enough to send a scout over here. 'Cause we're goin' to do thet little thing to him. . . . Happy, dig up thet box of cigars I've been savin'."

"Cigars!" ejaculated Smoky Slocum. "Hank, trot out some champagne," jeered Brad Lincoln.

"Nothin' to drink, fellers," returned Hays. "We're a sober outfit. No gamblin' for real money. No arguin' or fightin'. . . . Any of you who doesn't like thet can walk out now."

They were impressed by his cool force, as well as by the potency of the future. Certainly not one of them moved.

"All right. Wal an' good. We're set," he went on. "Today I changed my mind about goin' slow with this job. Never mind why."

Jim Wall had a flash of divination as to this sudden right-about-face. Hays was deeper than he had appeared at first.

"Herrick reckons there are upwards of ten thousand head of stock on the range. Some of these Mormons he bought out sold without a count. I bought half a dozen herds for Herrick. An' I underestimated say, rough calculatin', around two thousand head. So there's twelve thousand good. Thet's a herd, fellers. Can it be drove?"

"Are we a lot of cowboys?" queried Lincoln, scornfully.

"No, an' neither air we a lot of rustlers," resumed Hays, just as sarcastically. "If you can't help me figger, why, just keep still. . . . Air there any of you who wouldn't care to play a game for twelve thousand head of cattle at forty dollars per?"

There did not appear to be a single one.

"Ahuh. Wal, thet's okay. Now can we drive such a big herd?" Hays this time directed his query at Jim.

"How far?" asked Jim.

"Fifty miles. Fair-to-middlin' road. We can meet buyers there who'll pay an' no questions asked. No stiff count."

"Yes. With eight riders well mounted it can be done in three days—provided they don't have to fight."

"Aha!" said Smoky, puffing a cloud of smoke.

"Wal, we'd have to fight shore as hell. An' Heeseman's outfit is bigger than ours."

"No sense in stealin' stock for some other outfit," added Brad Lincoln.

"Agree with you," returned Hays, promptly. "I didn't like the idee. But it's so damn' easy!"

"Boss, listen to this idee," spoke up Smoky. "Most of these Star cattle range down the valley twenty miles below here. How'd it do for, say, five of us to quit Herrick an' hide below somewhere?"

Meanwhile you go to Grand Junction an' arrange to have your buyers expect a bunch of cattle every week. A thousand to two thousand head. We'd make the drives an' keep it up as long as it worked. You're boss, an' Wall here is foreman. You could keep the cowboys close to the ranch."

"Smoky, it's shore a big idee," declared Hays, enthusiastically. "But what about Heeseman?"

"Wal, we couldn't keep it from him."

"Not very long, anyway."

"Heeseman's the rub. We gotta do away with him."

"Let's clean out his bunch."

Hays shook his shaggy head over these various replies. "Fellers, if we pick a fight with thet outfit some of us will get killed an' others crippled. Then we couldn't pull the deal. A better idee is for one of us to kill Heeseman."

"Reckon it would be. Thet'd bust the outfit."

"Who'd you pick on to do thet, Hank?"

Jeff Bridges boomed out: "Why, Smoky, of course, or Brad."

"Nope," said Hays, shaking his head. "With all thet's due Smoky an' Brad I wouldn't choose either. Jim, here, is the man for thet job."

"An' why?" demanded Smoky, in the queerest of tones.

Whether he was insulted or jealous would have been difficult to say.

"Wal, for two reasons: Jim has it on any of us handlin' a gun, an' second—"

"How do you know thet?" interposed Lincoln, acidly.

"Hell's fire!" burst out Hays, suddenly ablaze. "There you go, you—I suppose you think I ought to let you try Jim out? Wal, you can gamble on this: If I did we'd be two men out."

His fiery intensity silenced them. Jim personally was relieved to see this little byplay. It showed Hays was a strong leader and it gave a line on the testy Slocum and the taciturn Lincoln.

"Go on, boss. I'm shore we figger you have the best for all of us at heart," spoke up Mac for the first time. "You never played no favorites."

"Jim, it'd be murder for you to throw a gun on Heeseman," said Hays, spreading wide his hands.

"I'm like Brad. How do you know that?" rejoined Jim coolly.

"WAL, Heeseman's gifts don't lie thet way. He's killed a couple of men thet I know of. But I'll bet I can go pick a quarrel with him an' do it myself. To be dead certain though, we'd better sick Jim on him. Besides, Heeseman doesn't know Jim."

"If you ask me, I say the better plan is to waylay Heeseman an' his outfit," said Lincoln. "Do for him sure an' all or most of his men. There's a couple of rattlesnakes among them."

"Waylay them, huh?" mused Hays, scratching his unshaven chin. "Sort of low-down for us."

"We're playin' for big stakes."

"Mebbe we could drive off six or eight thousand head of stock before Heeseman ever found out," put in Smoky. "What's the sense of fightin' it out till we have to? Let's don't cross any dirty devils till we come to them."

The suggestion found instant favor on all sides.

"But we don't want Heeseman trailin' us," expostulated Hays.

"You mean after we pull the deal?" queried Brad, incredulously.

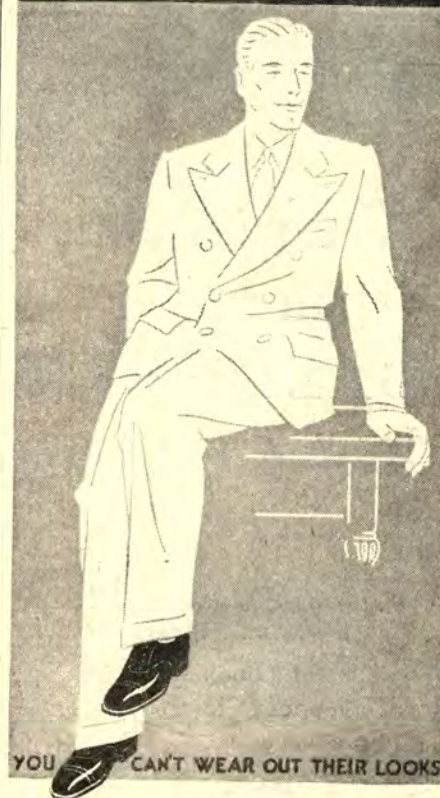
"Shore I mean after."

"Wal, what in thunderation do we give a damn for him, when we've got the coin an' are on our way to thet roost we're due to find?"

"I don't just like the idee, fellers," replied Hays, evasively.

(Continued on page 66)

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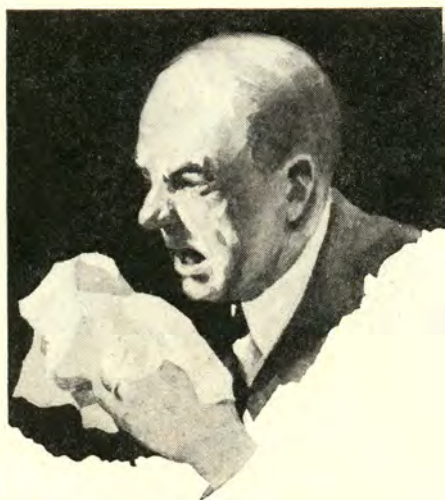


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(Continued from page 65)

Jim Wall, studying the robber leader closely, imagined that Hays was not exposing all the details of his plot.

"Aw, to hell with Heeseeman, before or after!" exclaimed Smoky. "Let's put my idee to a vote."

When this suggestion was solemnly complied with, making use of the deck of cards, it was found that Slocum had won.

"So far so good," said Hays, as if relieved. "Now let's see . . . Smoky, tomorrow you take your gang, includin' Brad, an' quit. Pack a slew of grub an' grain, an' hide out below. Cache what you don't need. I'll go to Grand Junction for new hands. See? But all I'll come back with will be instructions for you to follow. Then you can go drivin'."

"Good. An' how about the cash?"

"Wal, them buyers won't pay me in advance, you can gamble on thet. But they'll pay you. Just divide with your outfit an' save our share."

"Short an' sweet. I like it more all the time," declared Smoky. The trust imposed upon him sat lightly. Jim had no doubt of his honesty with his leader and comrades. Herein lay another reason for the loyalty to Hays. The robber began to loom to Jim.

"We'll want to know where your camp is," went on Hays. "Reckon I'd better ride out with you tomorrow."

"No. You rustle for Grand Junction. We'll see thet Happy an' Jim know where to find our camp."

JIM thought of something: "Men, has it occurred to you that you can't drive cattle up this road and through the ranch?"

"Shore. No need. It'd be a seventy-mile drive if we came this way. But we'll drive round by Limestone, an' up the other valley road. About the same distance to Grand."

"Air we forgettin' anythin'?" muttered the leader, his big eyes staring into space.

"Nothin' but Heeseeman," croaked Lincoln.

"Wal, there are a couple of more things, but we needn't go into them now," responded the leader. He slid several cigars into his vest pocket, and throwing the box upon the table he said: "Divide 'em even. An' I hope it won't be your last dollar smoke."

The conference ended. Hays turned to the open fire, and seeking a seat in the shadow by the chimney he pondered. It was Jim's opinion that the chief had vastly more on his mind than he had divulged. Lincoln gave him a suspicious stare. The others seemed eminently pleased with the outlook, though no more was said in Jim's hearing. They joked and smoked.

Jim bade them good night and went out. His last glimpse of Hays was thought-provoking. Lighting another cigar, which he vowed would be the last of his smoking for a while, Jim strolled up and down the porch, revolving in mind the conference.

It was a spring night, starry, with an edge on the mountain air that meant frost in the morning. Coyotes were barking. And there came another sound which never failed to rend—the peeping of spring frogs. Plaintive, sweet, they probed the depths of memory. Jim did not like the night so well as the day. And although he had crossed the Rubicon, had involved his word and meant to see this deal through, he liked it less and less.

Was it possible that this lantern-eyed robber had evil intentions toward Herrick's sister? Jim scouted the suspicion. Certainly, if the man was susceptible to women, he would react normally under favorable conditions. But to plot more than he had expressed,

to involve his men in something vastly worse than the mere stealing of a herd of cattle, to betray them with murder and abduction—No! this Hank Hays was too big a man for that. He had the loyalty of his band. And yet—

"Damn the girl part of it anyhow," he muttered, flinging his half-smoked cigar out into the noisy brook. Why did a woman have to come along to upset the best-laid plans of men?

THE next morning brought somber faces and action. Five of Hays' outfit rode away with six of the pack horses and most of the supplies. Hays watched them until they disappeared among the cedars.

"Wal, now I'll brace the boss," he said.

"What excuse will you give him?" asked Jim.

"Anythin' would do to tell Herrick. But Heeseeman will see through me, I'm afeared."

"Very well. You tell Herrick that your outfit split over me."

"Over you? Dog-gone! Thet ain't so poor. But why?"

"Both Slocum and Lincoln are sort of touchy about gun-throwing, aren't they? Well, tell him how queer that brand of gunman is—how he instinctively hates the real gunman. And that Slocum and Lincoln made you choose between them and me. You chose me and they rode off with their pard."

"Ahuh. Sort of so the idee will get to Heeseeman's ears that in a pinch with guns I'd rather have you backin' me than them?"

"Exactly. Only elaborate it. Herrick won't understand, so the more mysterious you make it the better."

Not long afterward Hays returned to the cabin jubilant. "You'd never guess, Jim. That Englisher laughed like the very devil. An' he ordered me to ride off after some desperadoes who're not afraid of Jim Wall."

"Ha! Ha! But Heeseeman won't get a laugh out of it."

"See here. Don't fetch things to a ruction with him."

"I'll steer clear, Hays. But if Heeseeman should happen to brace me—"

"Shoot the lights out of him," interrupted Hays, fiercely. "Wal, I'm off for Grand. Happy, pack me a snack of grub."

"How long will it take you to ride over?"

"Eight hours, I reckon. An' I'll be back tomorrow night."

"Won't take you long then to make connection with your buyers?"

"Wal, I should smile not."

"Excuse my curiosity, boss, but I can't help wondering how you can establish connections so quickly, since you claim you are not a rustler."

"Thet's my affair, Jim. But I'll tell you some day."

"Certainly these buyers will know you're selling stolen cattle?"

"Oh, shore."

AFTER Hays had gone Jim settled himself to pass the hours away.

"Mebbe it won't be so tedious," observed Happy Jack, dryly. "We've got three rifles an' a sack of shells right handy. So let 'em come."

Jim half expected a visit from Herrick, but the morning dragged by without any sign of anyone. About mid-afternoon, however, six riders appeared coming down the lane along the bench. The sight made Jim start. How often had he seen the like—a compact little company of riders, dark-garbed, riding dark horses! It was tremendously suggestive to a man of his experience.

He reached inside the door and, drawing out his rifle, advanced to the front of the porch.

(To be continued next week)

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