

The Fighting Tenderfoot

By William MacLeod Raine

Copyright by William MacLeod Raine WNU Service

CHAPTER XIV

Second Fiddle

Mary Joe Ford, Barbara's housekeeper, came out of the house, a worried look on her face. She nodded greeting to O'Hara, then spoke to Barbara.

"Have you seen Bennie anywhere? I've been all over the place lookin' for him. Tim put him on that little piebald pony an' went into the stable to do something. When he came back Bennie had gone."

"He can't be up the creek, because I've just come down it," O'Hara said. "I'll take a look and see if he's below the ford."

"I wish you would, Mr. O'Hara—an' I'll certainly paddle him proper when I get my hands on him."

O'Hara remounted and rode to the creek. He found no sign of the truant below the ford. As he rode back up the creek Barbara came riding to meet him.

"You didn't find him?" she asked.

"No."

"He isn't around the place. Tim says he spoke about Round cliff. Bennie's crazy to ride. Maybe he started for it."

In the snow they found tracks evidently made by the little piebald pony. Somewhere between them and Round cliff, which rose on the rock rim to dominate the ranch, they would no doubt catch up with the young adventurer.

There was no reason for frantic haste. Their horses would travel much faster than the pony, and the youngster could not have had more than fifteen or twenty minutes' start of them. In less than an hour he would be back at the ranch in the disciplinary hands of Mary Joe.

O'Hara's chance had come. He knew he must make the most of it, must fling into words the emotion that engulfed him. But his old shyness rose up and took him by the throat.

As for Barbara, she would go no farther to meet him. Her eyes had made confession when they stood opposite each other over David's buggy. It was for him to storm the last fortress of her defenses if he wished it to be so.

He swallowed hard, found words, rejected them, and got as far as "Barbara!" gulped out desperately.

They were in the canyon's mouth. Her eyes met his expectantly, a shining courage back of the diffidence that fluttered in them.

A cool and mocking voice interrupted. "An' here we are again, old friends all of us."

Barbara's heart died within her. Bob Quantrell had ridden out from behind a large boulder. Little Bennie Ford sat in front of him. In the outlaw's hands rested lightly a Colt revolver.

He did not raise it. He did not order O'Hara to throw up his hands. With a thin, grim smile on his face he sat there watching the man who had hunted him from one cover to another, broken up his gang, captured and shackled him.

"Not lookin' for me, are you, Sheriff?" he continued derisively.

Out of her terror Barbara spoke quickly, in a desperate plea for mercy. Her tortured memory swept back to that other day when he had once before despoiled her life.

"We were lookin' for Bennie. He was lost."

"An' now he's found. Ain't you, Bennie?"

"I was gonna ride to Round cliff an' I met Bob," the little fellow piped. "But I wasn't lost, not the leastest bit."

O'Hara had not yet spoken. He did not speak now. His eyes rested on the face out of which a mocking devil leered at him. At sight of Quantrell his heart had jumped and then his vitals had grown chill. But he was not in panic. His brain functioned logically as he estimated the chances.

He could not take the luck of battle, not with little Bennie sitting in front of the outlaw. Quantrell had not put the youngster in front of him, O'Hara knew, because he feared the issue if it came to bullets. With his six-shooter already out he could drill the sheriff through and through before the latter could even lift his weapon. Why, then, was he using Bennie as a shield? Was it because he wanted to hold the officer inactive while he enjoyed his chagrin and terror?

Again Barbara voiced her agonized plea to the young desperado. She must save her lover who was so near to death. Somehow—somehow—she must stand between Garrett and impending doom.

"If he had been lookin' for you would he have brought me along?" she cried.

"Are you claimin', ma'am, that he knew Bennie would get lost an' that he came from Concho so as to be here to find him?" Quantrell asked, his

shallow light blue eyes not once lifting from his trapped hunter.

"He came to see me. We—we're going to be married," Barbara explained. She had no time to think out the most effective way to reach this young killer's heart. But she had heard he was in love. A woman's appeal might touch him.

"If nothing happens first," he added with smiling suavity. "I wish you heaps of joy, Miss Barbara, whoever you marry."

"He's sheriff," she pushed on. "He had to do his duty, but he has no feeling against you. Why don't you go away again while there's time? Let him go, an' he'll let you go."

"That's real good of him," Quantrell murmured ironically. "Let me go, will he? Yes, ma'am, I'd call that right kind of him."

"Don't you owe me something?" she begged. "You killed my husband and left my baby without a father."

A spasm of hatred twitched his face. "I'll kill him again if he was alive."

"But not Garrett," she pleaded. "He's just sheriff. It's nothing personal. You wouldn't want to spoil my life again just when—when—"

Quantrell laughed, not without bitterness. "Sheriffs are like outlaws, ma'am. They hadn't ought to be lovers. Pick a preacher if you want a real safe one. What's yore idea? Am I to let this fellow chase me around an' shoot up my friends an' then let him go when I've got the dead wood on him? I notice he didn't let me go the other day."

"He only did what he had to do. You didn't suffer any personal damage from him."

"I heard some talk about a h-ngin' from one of his crowd," Quantrell answered cynically. "I got nothin' against yore friend here. Maybe I had onct, a year or two ago. But that's in the discard. Point is, it looks like it's got to be him or me, one. He sleeps on my trail too close for comfort. Well, I don't allow it's gonna be me."

"But if you'd leave the country, go to Mexico—"

"I'm not almin' to leave the country. Neither him nor anyone else can drive me out till I get ready to go."

"We used to be friends, kinda," she said, smiling at him with pitiful eagerness. "Don't you remember? I called you 'Bob.' We had our little jokes together. For the sake of old times and because of my little fatherless baby, won't you let Garrett go this time?"

The outlaw smiled, a friendly, amiable smile, and his eyes met hers. "All right. You win, ma'am. Yore silent friend gets off—this time. But if you've got any influence with him you tell him real earnest to quit crowdin' Bob Quantrell. A whole lot of things are supposed to be safer than that."

O'Hara spoke. "Let's understand each other, Bob. As long as I'm sheriff I've got to keep after you."

"You've had yore warnin', fellow. Next time there won't be a nice young lady to beg you off. Right now you hit the trail back to the Diamond Tail." Quantrell lifted Bennie from the horse and lowered him to the ground.

Bennie ran back of the big boulder and returned a moment later with the piebald pony. O'Hara helped him to get into the saddle.

The outlaw sat motionless, revolver in hand, while the other three fled out of the canyon, O'Hara bringing up

lagged behind was to him an unimportant trifle.

The strain of peril relaxed, Barbara had to fight against a wave of faintness. She caught at the saddle horn with both hands to steady herself.

"I think you saved my life," O'Hara said in a voice unsteady with emotion. "I couldn't lift a finger to help myself, not with Bennie sitting in front of him, and if Bennie hadn't been there it wouldn't have done any good for me to try."

"I thought—I was afraid—" she murmured.

"He couldn't stand out against what you said. There's a human streak in him. And he likes children. When you spoke about the baby—"

"I didn't know what I was saying. I was sick with fear." A shiver of reminiscent dread ran down her spine.

"I'll never forget what you said," he told her; then flung at her the question in his mind: "Are we going to be married, Barbara?"

"Are we?" she echoed, her voice colorless.

With a sudden jubilant singing of the blood he knew they were. "We are," he cried.

Bennie was fifty yards ahead of them when they reached the creek. He put his pony to a canter as he mounted the slope.

O'Hara slipped from the saddle at the edge of the willows and caught the bridle rein of Barbara's horse.

"We'll have to hurry if we're going to save Benny from a spanking," she protested, rather faintly.

"Bennie will have to take his chance," he said with decision. "He needs that paddling, anyhow. Get down."

"You're very masterful, aren't you?" she said, her eyes both tender and mocking. But, obediently, she dismounted and found herself in his arms.

A happy little laugh welled from her throat as her eyes turned to his.

It was fifteen minutes later that she reminded him of their errand.

"We came to find Bennie."

"He can't be lost again already, can he?" her lover laughed.

But he submitted to walk with her to the ranch house, leading their horses by the bridles.

Bennie, his face tear-stained, made a public announcement, one influenced by recent events which had cast more than a shadow behind.

"I'm gonna live at your house, Barb'ra, after you 'n' the sheriff get married, 'n' when I grow up I'm gonna be a noutlaw like Bob Quantrell."

Mary Joe looked quickly at Barbara and observed her confusion. "He says you met Bob Quantrell."

"Yes," confirmed O'Hara. "He turned Bennie over to us."

"No gun plays?" Phillips asked quickly.

"No."

"Barb'ra told him she was gonna marry the sheriff," Bennie contributed. "An' she is, too, an' I'm gonna live with 'em."

The eyes of the lovers met. Barbara smiled permission for O'Hara to tell the news. He did so, and created no sensation.

"I knew it all the time," Mary Joe said calmly. "Ask Jack if I didn't tell him so three weeks ago."

"I expect you've been telling Jack more interesting things than that," Barbara replied, smiling at her former man.

Whereupon more news came out.

"We'll make a double wedding of it," Mary Joe suggested gaily.

"Can you ride with me, Jack?" O'Hara presently asked him. "I've got to follow Quantrell's trail while it's hot."

"I reckon so," Phillips answered. "Soon as I'm caught an' saddled."

"I want to see you, Garrett, just a minute, in the house," Barbara said. Inside, she turned swiftly on him, catching the lapels of his coat with an eagerness almost savage. "Do you

have to go—right away, when I've had you such a little time? Can't you forget that man just for today an' stay here with me?"

"I wish I could, sweetheart." The word of endearment fell shyly, as did the caress accompanying it. "But I can't. I've got to follow him at once."

"He might have killed you today, Garrett—and he didn't," she reminded him.

"I'm an officer, not a private citizen, Barbara. It's my business to capture him because he's a criminal. I've got to stay with the job."

"I suppose so," she conceded reluctantly. "But you'll be careful, won't you? You'll come back to me."

"I'll be very careful, and I'll come back to you," he promised. "When I finish this one job I'll resign."

She clung to him, as though she would never let him go, kissing with

drop on Mr. Sheriff, an' for two cents I would have bumped him off."

"Was he mounted?"

"Sure." Quantrell looked at his companion in surprise. "Ain't everybody mounted in these hills?"

"I'm not." The younger outlaw noticed an odd glitter in Deever's eyes. "I got no horse an' I'm starved an' wore out climbin' these d-d hills an' wadin' through snow. You fool, why didn't you kill O'Hara an' get his horse for me?"

"Don't talk thataway to me, fellow," Quantrell snarled. "How d' I know you wasn't fixed with a horse by this time? Took me about the flick of a cow's tail to get one."

"Where is yore horse?"

"Back in the pines where we always tie."

"We'd better get outa here," Deever said. "O'Hara's posse bumped into me half an hour ago an' took two-three shots at me. I ducked into the big rocks an' crawled up here. But they're after me hotfoot."

"Where's Sommers?"

"He left me at Squaw crossing. He's almin' to lie low with a cousin of his near Agua Caliente. Wish I'd gone with him." There was a hunted look in the man's eyes. His hardy confidence had deserted him. "They'll get us sure. They're armed with rifles an' we ain't, an' I ain't tasted food for 'most three days."

"Buck up, Deever. They've not got us yet, an' they're not gonna get us—without a real dog fight first."

"Thought old Rim Rock Hanson would gimme food an' a horse, but his place is deserted. What'll we do, Bob?" whined the tormented man. "Tell you I haven't eat or slept either one. I'm bucked out, an' this posse liable to be here any minute."

"Keep yore shirt on, old-timer," advised Quantrell. "We'll try to slip over to Bear creek an' down it. We can ride an' tie till we pick up another horse. We both been in a lot tighter holes than this one. Sure have."

A voice from outside halted the horse.

Deever started. His sunken eyes went wildly to those of the other outlaw. "It's the posse."

"I reckon you're right. Old Amen Owen's voice, I'd say. We better sneak outa the window an' try a run for the bronc. We'll make it fine through the big rocks more 'n likely."

"With one horse for the two of us we can't make a getaway. I got a good mind to surrender."

"An' you with a gun in each hand. Fellow, you're yellow. Slide outa that window an' do like I say. If you've got any sand in yore craw I'll pull you through."

"Tell you I'm sick," Deever protested. "I been through hell these last two-three days an' nights."

Yet he did as Quantrell told him. The two crept from rock to rock. Not till they were close to the pines did one of the posse catch sight of Deever and fire. Other shots sounded, but the outlaws had reached the timber.

Deever caught his foot in a projecting rock and fell. As Quantrell ran past him to the horse Bob called.

"Keep a-comin', Deever."

The bandy-legged man had fallen into a panic of fear. Either he thought that Quantrell was about to desert him or else he feared both of them could not escape on one horse.

As the younger man pulled the rein from the slip knot he heard the pounding feet of his companion.

Quantrell turned. "An' set, old-timer, for—"

Deever's six-shooter roared twice.

Bob Quantrell staggered, fired once blindly into the ground, lurched against the trunk of a tree, and slid along it to the snow.

A moment, and Deever was in the saddle galloping for safety.

Twenty minutes later, still riding hard, he swung around a curve in the trail. He dragged the horse to its haunches. For he was face to face with the sheriff and Jack Phillips.

He followed his first instinctive reaction and fired at O'Hara. Before the echo of the shot came back from the canyon wall the guns of O'Hara and Phillips were in action.

Deever dropped his weapon and clutched at the saddle horn. He slid to the ground.

"Don't shoot again," he gasped. "You've got me."

Almost before they reached him he was dead.

The officers looked at each other.

"Something drivin' him in a hurry," Phillips said. "Do you reckon he met yore boys?"

"He's riding the same horse Bob Quantrell was two hours ago. That is, he was a minute ago."

"Then we better go slow. Bob is liable to be around somewhere."

In a little while they met O'Hara's posse and learned the news of Deever's treachery to Quantrell.

"Scared they couldn't both make it. So he plugged Bob twice through the heart," Owen explained.

They carried the bodies of the outlaws to the Circle S O ranch where they were to spend the night.

O'Hara did not wait for supper. He ate a couple of sandwiches and drank a cup of coffee. On a fresh horse he struck across to the Diamond Tail.

It was dark long before he reached the ranch.

When he knocked on the door Barbara opened it for him. At sight of her lover she caught her breath sharply.

"Is it—everything—all right?"

He caught a glimpse of the outline of her bosom beneath the wrap she had caught up and thrown on.

"My job is finished," he told her.

From her throat came a little sobbing sound of joy.



Bob Quantrell Approached With the Greatest Care the Old Dilapidated Cabin.

feminine ferocity the ardent lips that met hers.

Her whispered confession just reached his ears.

"I've loved you, Garrett—always, always, and didn't know it."

She pushed him from her and ran down the passage into her bedroom.

As he strode out of the house to his horse there was a light in Garrett O'Hara's eyes that never had been there before.

Bob Quantrell approached with the greatest care the old dilapidated cabin where the outlaws had been accustomed to hole up. The price of life for him was wariness, and he had no intention of running into a trap for lack of adequate precaution.

When at last he opened the door noiselessly and looked inside it was to see the crouched figure of a man confronting him, a man with a six-shooter in each hand.

"Throw 'em up," a hoarse voice ordered excitedly.

In that fraction of a second during which Quantrell's 44 flashed out the two men recognized each other. The two-gun man was Deever.

"Thought O'Hara had you in the calaboose, the squat rustler said in surprise. "That's the story I heard."

"Do I look like the kinda bird that would stay in a calaboose?" asked Quantrell boastfully. "I bumped off Buck Grogan an' said 'Adolis!'"

"That must be why there's a posse on Horse creek."

"I reckon that's why," Quantrell admitted casually. "But I served notice this afternoon on O'Hara not to crowd me."

"On O'Hara? Where?"

"Above the Diamond Tail, at the mouth of the Box canyon. I had the

Persian Poet Laureate Kept Reasonably Busy

Persia appears to be the only other country which has maintained a poet laureate in recent years. Until Muzaffer-ed-Din abolished the post in 1896, the court of Teheran had for centuries possessed a poet laureate, whose duties were far more onerous than those of his British equivalent.

According to Narcisse Persin, who spent some years in Persia at the beginning of the last century, court etiquette prescribed that whenever the shah traveled outside the capital his suite should include a dwarf, a giant, a jester, a historiographer and the poet laureate—these five being treated on an equal footing among the lesser ministrants to his majesty's pleasure and diversion.

The historiographer had to record for the benefit of posterity all the doings and sayings of his master, and the laureate was called upon to celebrate a large proportion of these in verse. M. Persin highly approved of

the custom, which he found rigidly followed, "for the shah, knowing that many of his utterances and deeds would be crystallized in an ode, felt bound on these royal progresses to speak and behave majestically."—Manchester (England) Guardian.

Proof of Friendship

A telephone call came to the superintendent of a sanitarium near Chicago.

"Say," queried the caller, "have you got a fellow named B—out there?"

"Why, yes."

"Is he paying you any board?"

"No; he's a charity patient."

"Say, that guy hasn't got any more right to be a charity patient than I have. Why, he's got \$400 in one bank and \$600 in another and he owns a bungalow out in Waukegan. You'd better hide his clothes before you give him a bill, though, or he'll skip out on you. He's that kind of a crook."

"Say," demanded the superintendent, "who are you and how do you come to know so much about B—'s affairs?"

"Oh," replied the unknown caller, "I'm a close friend of his."—Chicago Evening Post.

Not Adapted to English

No less than eight Hebrew words are translated river in our English Bible. All have differing shades of meaning, ranging from watercourses only occasionally bearing water (Nachal), to rivers likely at times to be in overflow flood (Zeor). These delicate degrees of meaning are incapable of being reproduced in our more prosaic language.



"Not Lookin' for Me, Are You, Sheriff?" He Continued Derisively.

the rear. When they were no longer in sight he wheeled his horse and followed the winding of the gulch as it cut deeper into the hills.

He was pleased with himself. It suited his whim today to be merciful. Even if Barbara Ingram had not begged for mercy he would not have killed O'Hara, he told himself now. But he was glad she had sued for her lover's life. It ministered to Quantrell's vanity to feel that she recognized that the power of life and death had been in his hand. Because he had come off best he felt a certain amiable kindness rather than animosity toward Garrett O'Hara.

Unmusically but jocosely he assured the hills that Daddy would be home when the round-up was through.

CHAPTER XV

A Job Finished

Bennie proudly led the homeward-bound party. Unaware of a rod in pickle for him, he wanted to be the first to reach the ranch with the story of his adventure. That two lovers

Feathers in your mouth?

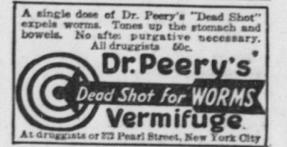
Coated tongue, bad breath? Watch them vanish when you clean accumulated waste matter out of your system. Feen-a-mint works thoroughly, gently, efficiently with smaller doses. Non-habit-forming. Safe for young and old.



Feen-a-mint
FOR CONSTIPATION

Sunshine

—All Winter Long
AT THE FOREMOST DESERT RESORT OF THE WEST—marvelous climate—warm sunny days—clear starlit nights—dry invigorating air—splendid roads—gorgeous mountain scenes—finest hotels—the ideal winter home.
Write Geo. A. Chaffey
PALM SPRINGS
California



Work Laid Aside
A.—If you spend so much time at golf you don't have anything laid aside for a rainy day.
B.—Won't I? My desk is loaded up with work that I've put aside for a rainy day.

Kidneys Disordered?

Act Promptly When Warned By Kidney Irregularities.
When bladder irritations, getting up at night and constant backache keep you miserable, don't take chances! Help your kidneys at the first sign of disorder. Use Doan's Pills. Successful for more than 50 years. Endorsed by hundreds of thousands of grateful users. Sold by dealers everywhere.



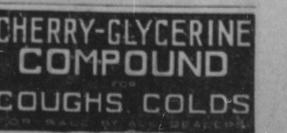
Even When It's Off
Bear—What is your favorite stock?
Bull—Union Pacific. It's "UP" whenever it appears on the tape.
Utterly Impossible
"Forget your worries," says the doctor—and then he sends his bill.—Grand Rapids Press.

If one's snails are witty, he can get paid for them; he can even start a magazine to snarl in.
Did anything that your enemies said about you ever improve your character after you heard it?
A "nice, unassuming young man" is expected to agree to what anybody proposes.
Experience makes a man of one who is soft, but a scarred one.

Do today thy nearest duty.

WOMEN SHOULD LEARN USES OF MAGNESIA

To women who suffer from nausea, or so-called "morning sickness," this is a blessing. Most nurses know it. It is advised by leading specialists: Over a small quantity of finely cracked ice pour a teaspoonful of Phillips' Milk of Magnesia. Sip slowly until you are relieved. It ends sick stomach or inclination to vomit. Its anti-acid properties make Phillips' Milk of Magnesia quick relief in heartburn, sour stomach, gas. Its mild laxative action assures regular bowel movement. Used as a mouth-wash it helps prevent tooth decay during expectancy.



CHERRY-GLYCERINE COMPOUND
COUGHS COLDS

(THE END.)