

# ROBBERS' ROOST

SYNOPSIS

by ZANE GREY

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Jim Wall, young cowpuncher from Wyoming, seeks a new field in Utah. He meets Hank Hays, who tells him he is working for an Englishman, Herrick, who has located a big ranch in the mountains. Hays and others are plotting to steal their employer's cattle and money. With Hays and two other rustlers, Jim Wall goes to Herrick's ranch. Herrick announces that his sister, Helen, is coming to live with him. Hays unfolds his plan for getting possession of Herrick's 12,000 head of live stock. He and his lieutenants ride away to drive off the first bunch of cattle. Heeseman, Hays' rival among the cattle rustlers, tells Wall that Hays was once his (Heeseman's) partner and double-crossed him. Jim is sent to meet Miss Herrick. He tries to impress on her that he (Jim) is a desperado of the worst type, but the girl treats the information lightly. Hays betrays unusual interest in the coming of Miss Herrick. The rustlers begin driving cattle from the ranch. Wall finds himself falling in love with Helen, and he fears Hays has designs on the girl.

## CHAPTER VI—Continued

At breakfast next morning Hays raved about the fact that Smoky had not been there for over two weeks. "Things air comin' to a head," he concluded, gloomily.

"Reckon they ought to have made two drives by now," rejoined Happy Jack. "I rid down the valley yesterday eight or ten miles. Cattle thinned out, boss. Any cowboy with eyes in the back of his head would be on to us by now."

"Shore. Haven't I kept them workin' up here. But I've no control over this hossback ridin' after hounds. Pretty soon Herrick will be chasin' down Limestone way. Then the fire'll be out."

"Hank, he wouldn't know the difference," interposed Jim.

"Aw, I don't care," replied Hays, harshly, and that finally intimidated much. "Wait till Smoky's outfit shows up!"

Every morning when Jim rode down to the corrals he fell back under the spell of something sweeter than wine. The sunny hours with the sage flat ahead, the fragrant pines, the baying hounds, and always out in front this bright-haired girl, were vastly different from the dark hours when the day was done. Nothing could be truer than that this utterly incongruous and bitterly sweet situation could not last. In moments of humility, engendered by the higher emotions this girl aroused, Jim clasped to his breast the fact that he was protecting her from worse men.

Barnes and another of the cowboys had taken the horses for the Herricks up to the house. To Jim's honest dismay he espied Helen riding ahead, with the cowboys behind leading her brother's mount. Herrick was not coming. The hounds bounded and cavorted about her, keen for the chase.

Miss Herrick looked far less proud and unattainable in the boy's riding garb she had adopted. Moreover, it had transformed her, yet her femininity appeared more provokingly manifest than ever.

Barnes turned Herrick's horse over to a stable boy, and with his companion fell in behind Miss Herrick, who rode out upon the valley. Jim rejoiced them, and they trotted their horses together.

"Why didn't Herrick come?" asked Jim.

"He was rowin' with Heeseman," replied Barnes, soberly.

"You don't say! What about?"

"Reckon I don't know. They shet up as I come along," returned the cowboy. "But I seen enough to calculate somethin's wrong. They was on the porch. Herrick looked sort of peevish. He didn't want his sister to go huntin' today, I heard that. An' she said right pert she was goin'."

"How did Heeseman look?" went on Jim, pondering. Something was up. For two days Heeseman's outfit had been through hauling timber.

"Dead serious, like he was tryin' to persuade the boss to somethin'."

Jim lapsed into silence. What turn would affairs take next? It was getting warm around Star ranch.

Each day the hunters had to ride farther afield to find game. Jack-rabbit chasing had grown too tame for Miss Herrick.

Three or four miles out the hounds jumped a coyote from a clump of sagebrush.

The cowboys took the lead, then came Miss Herrick, while Jim brought up the rear. It was a long, gradual ascent up to an open ridge.

Here the hounds jumped a herd of deer. Despite the yelling of the cowboys they dashed up the ridge with a chorus of wild yelps and barks. They all passed out of hearing.

Jim caught up with Miss Herrick, who waited in an open spot among the pines. Flushed and disheveled, with her sombrero on the pommel, panting from the arduous ride, she made a distracting picture.

"Hunt's off for us, Miss Herrick," said Jim.

"Too bad! But wasn't it fun—while it lasted?" she replied gayly. "Let us rest the horses. I'm out of breath myself."

Jim dismounted to tighten his saddle cinches.

"Wall, take a look at my cinches," she said.

"May I ask you not to call me Wall? I must remind you I'm no butler."

"Pray pardon me," she rejoined, in surprise. "I presume I should address you as Mr. Wall?"

"Yes, if you're too stuck up to call me Jim," he said.

She lifted her chin and deligned no reply. And that infuriated him.

"While I'm at it I'll tell you this, too," he went on doggedly. "You must not ride around alone again. I've had no chance to speak with you. But I told your brother. He laughed in my face. He is a fool."

"Mr. Wall, I will not listen to such talk," she spoke up, spiritedly.

"Oh, yes, you will," he flashed, striding over to her horse. "You're not in an English drawing room now, confronted by a disrespectful butler. You're in Utah, girl. And I am Jim Wall."

"That last is obvious, to my regret," she returned coldly. "Will you please be so kind as to tighten my cinches? It will be the last service I shall require of you."

"Thank the Lord!" ejaculated Jim, in grim heartiness. "All the same I'll tell you. If you were an American tenderfoot, it wouldn't be hard to make you understand. If you were western, you would not need to be told. But as an English lady of quality, who thinks her class, will protect her anywhere, you need to be jarred. . . . It's wrong for you to ride around alone on this range like any wild tomboy."

"Why?"

"Some of these men might kidnap you for ransom."

"Nonsense," she retorted, contemptuously.

"What do you say, Miss Herrick, when I tell you that Hank Hays has been watching you from the ridges, riding the lonely trails, biding his chance to waylay you?"

She paled at that.

"I don't believe it," she said, presently.

"And you'll go on riding alone when it suits your royal fancy?" he queried wistfully.

"That is no longer any concern of yours," she replied, at last stung. "But



"But I Certainly Shall Ride When and How I Please."

I certainly shall ride when and how I please."

"Then you're as big a fool as your brother," declared Jim hotly. "Here I am, the only man in this Star outfit with honesty enough to tell you the truth. And I get insulted and fired for my pains."

She sat her horse mute. Jim laid a strong hand on her pommel and shook it.

"Your saddle's loose. Will you oblige me by getting off?"

"I can ride it back," she rejoined, icily.

"But your blanket will slip out. The saddle might turn with you."

She removed her foot from the stirrup. "Tighten the cinches then—and hurry."

Jim complied expeditiously enough, but in doing so he accidentally touched her. Something like fire shot through him at the contact. Under its stimulus he looked up to say a few more words to her, words to mitigate his offense and protest his sincerity. But they were never uttered. She had bent over to fasten a lace of her boot, and when Jim raised his head it was to find his face scarcely a foot from her red lips. Without a thought, in a flash, he kissed them, and then drew back, stricken.

"How dare you!" she cried, in incredulous amazement and anger.

"It just happened. I—I don't know—"

She swung her leather quirt and struck him across the mouth. The blood spurted. The leap of Jim's fury was as swift. He half intercepted a second blow, which stung his neck, and snatching the quirt from her hand he flung it away. Then his iron clunge fastened in her blouse. One lunge dragged her out of the saddle. He wrapped his other arm around her and bent her back so quickly that when she began a furious struggle it was too late.

His mouth hard pressed on hers stilled any but smothered cries. There was a moment's wrestling. She was no weakling, but she was in the arms of a maddened giant. Repeatedly he kissed her lips, long, hard, passionate kisses.

Suddenly she collapsed heavily in his arms. The shock of that—its mean-

ing—pierced Wall with something infinitely more imperious and staggering than bitter wrath. He let go of her. There was blood on her lips and cheeks; otherwise her face was like alabaster.

"I think I must have been in love with you—and wanted to protect you—from men worse than myself," he went on, huskily. "I hope this will be a lesson to you. . . . Your brother was crazy to come here—crazier to let you come. Go home! Go before it's too late. Make him go. He will be ruined shortly."

She wiped the blood from her cheeks, and then shudderingly from her lips.

"You—did that—to frighten me?" she presently whispered, in horror, yet as if fascinated by something looming.

"Get on your horse and ride ahead of me," he ordered, curtly. "Now, Miss Helen Herrick, one last word: Don't tell your brother what I did to you till after I'm gone. . . . If you do I'll kill him!"

She left a glove lying on the ground. Jim made no effort to recover it. His horse had grazed a few paces away, and when he had reached him and mounted Miss Herrick was in her saddle. Jim let her get a few rods in advance before he followed.

The excess of his emotion wore off, leaving him composed, and sternly glad the issue had developed as it had. The situation had become intolerable for him. It mocked him that he had actually desired to appear well in the eyes of this girl. How ridiculous that one of a robber gang should be vain! But he was not conscious that being a thief made any difference in a man's feeling about women. He knew that he could not command respect or love; but that in no wise inhibited his own feelings. Strange, he had indeed fallen in love with Helen Herrick.

She rode on slowly down the ridge without looking to right or left. Her gaze appeared to be lowered.

The ranch-house came in sight. Miss Herrick saw it and halted a moment, to let Jim catch up with her.

"Can you be gentleman enough to tell me the truth?" she asked.

"I have not lied to you," replied Jim.

"That—that first time you kissed me—was it honestly unpremeditated?"

"Miss Herrick, I don't know what to swear by. But, yes, I have. My mother! I swear by memory of her that I never dreamed of insulting you—I looked up. There your face was close. Your lips red! And I kissed them."

They went on for perhaps ten paces, as far as the road, before she spoke again. "I believe you," she said, without a tremor of the rich, low voice, though it was evident her emotion was deeply stirred. "Your action was inexcusable, unforgivable. But I should not have struck you with the whip. . . . That, and your passion to frighten me, perhaps justified your brutality. . . . I shall not tell. . . . Don't leave Star ranch."

For an instant Jim felt as if he were upon the verge of a precipice. But her change from revulsion to inscrutable generosity called to all that was good within him.

"Miss Herrick, I'm sorry, but I must leave," he replied, sadly. "I'm only a wandering rider—a gunslinger and—a member of a gang of robbers. And I was mad enough to fall in love with you. . . . Forget it. . . . Go home to England. But if you won't do that—never ride out alone again."

He spurred his horse and galloped down the road, by the barns and across the court, into the lane that led along the brook. Suddenly he espied a compact group of mounted riders coming down the road beyond Hays' cabin. They bestrode bays and blacks, and there was that about them which drew Jim sharply up with a fiery thrill. Smoky's outfit!

Hays stood out in front of the cabin, bareheaded, his legs spread apart as if to anchor himself solidly, his hands at his hips, his sandy hair standing up ruffled like a mane.

"Huh! The boss isn't mad. Oh, no!" soliloquized Jim. "Small wonder. Smoky's outfit has busted loose, or is going to—Well, now, I've a hunch there's luck in this for me."

Jim made for the bridge and, crossing, looked up to see the horses of Smoky's outfit standing, bridles down, and the riders up on the porch. Jim mounted the steps.

Hank Hays sat upon the bench, his shaggy head against the wall, his pale eyes blazing at the row of men leaning on the porch rail.

Smoky was lighting a cigarette, not in the least perturbed, but his eyes had a hard, steely gleam. Brad Lincoln sat back on the rail, eyeing the chief with a sardonic grin. Mac appeared more than usually glumish; Bridges and Sparrowhawk Latimer betrayed extreme nervousness.

"Hello, men. What's the mix? Am I in or out?" returned Jim, sharply.

"I reckon you're in," replied Smocum.

"Hank is the only one thet's out. . . . Hyar, Jim, ketch this." He drew a dark green bundle from a bulging pocket and tossed it to Jim—a large, heavy roll of greenbacks tied with a buckskin thong.

"Yours on the divy, Jim," went on Smoky. "Don't count it now. There's a heap of small bills inside an' if you untie them hyar there'll be a mess. But it's a square divy to the last dollar."

"That's a hefty roll, Smoky, for a man to get for nothin'," observed Jim, dubiously.

TO BE CONTINUED.

## Conserve Hay Crop, Warning to Farmer

### Do Not Plow Up; Save All to Make Good for Shortage During Season.

Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.—WNU Service.

"Don't plow up timothy, alfalfa or any other crop which will produce hay in 1935."

This is the admonition of Dr. A. J. Pieters of the United States Department of Agriculture, who for a quarter of a century has kept tab on forage crops of the United States. He says, "Farmers would normally plow up a certain part of their timothy and alfalfa acreage. But in view of present conditions, it would seem wise to leave these fields, even though they do not produce a full crop."

His conclusion, that a shortage of hay is certain next year no matter how fast farm conditions might improve from now on, is substantiated by these facts:

Our greatest production of hay each year is from clover and timothy, an average of about 30,000,000 tons for the last ten years. Most of the 1935 crops would normally be produced from clover and timothy seeded in 1934. But this year's seeding is almost a total loss. Clover and timothy tonnage in 1935 is bound to be light.

Alfalfa comes next in annual production—around 25,000,000 tons. The acreage of this legume in 1935, if changed, will be less than this year. Thousands of acres seeded to alfalfa in the fall of 1933 and the spring of 1934 have failed for want of moisture. Many old alfalfa fields have been killed by the extreme drought. The shortage of this year's crop cannot possibly be made up in 1935.

Seed for the annual hays such as millet, Sudan grass and soy beans, may not be very abundant next year. In any event we are likely to need all the seed we can get. There is no way of immediately increasing the acreage of wild hays, which produce less than 15,000,000 tons annually.

"The present and future shortage of hay can be partially solved," says Doctor Pieters, "by saving every available acre of grasses and legumes for future use, even if such hay will not be needed by the farmer who cuts it or by farmers in that part of the country. There will be a market for the better grades of hay in the drought areas. Hay of poorer quality can be fed profitably at home. Besides the profit, it is the patriotic duty of every farmer to conserve every available pound of feed and forage. Our live stock and dairy industry depend upon it."

## Lice on Young Animals

### Check Normal Growth

Farm animals are sometimes infested with lice which may cause general unthriftiness, especially in young animals. Each species of farm animal has its own kind or kinds of lice which pass their entire life cycle on the animal, says the United States Department of Agriculture. Calves or colts badly infested with lice do not grow normally and may become permanently stunted. For this reason treatment should begin when parasites are first observed.

Animals affected with lice may be dusted with insect powder at any time, although the best method of eradication is by means of dipping or spraying animals, in the fall, in arsenical, coal-tar creosote, or nicotine solutions.

## Cow Requires Much Water

### or Milk Flow Is Reduced

About 87 per cent of milk is water, and if the cow is unable to get an ample supply of water, she is likely to reduce her milk flow. Cows producing large quantities of milk naturally need more water than dry cows or those producing only a small amount of milk.

According to the state college man, studies indicate that the average cow needs about 12 gallons of water a day, but some high producing cows have been found to drink as much as 25 gallons a day, especially during hot weather.

Cows produce more milk when they have water available at all times during the day, either in drinking fountains in the barn or at a stream, well, or some other outside source.

## Agricultural Squibs

The washing-away of soil from farm lands has resulted in the destruction of 35,000,000 acres for agricultural purposes.

Three hundred community canneries for the benefit of farmers have been established in Georgia within the last few years.

Dropping fruit into pinking containers, and carelessness in emptying containers cause needless stem punctures and bruises.

Crotalaria has come into wide favor as a soil-improvement crop among farmers of North Carolina.

A short collar chokes a horse when pulling, while, when it is too long, the shoulder points will be bruised.

Two major units of the United States Department of Agriculture, the bureau of entomology and the bureau of plant quarantine, have been merged into one. The new unit will be known as the bureau of entomology and plant quarantine.

Let Our Motto Be  
**GOOD HEALTH**  
BY DR. LLOYD ARNOLD  
Professor of Bacteriology and Preventive Medicine, University of Illinois, College of Medicine.

## SKIN POWER OF SELF DISINFECTION

HAVE you ever stopped to wonder what a marvelous structure this skin of ours is? It's only one twenty-fifth of an inch thick. Yet it's all the protection we have for the inside of our bodies against the outside world. Unless we're nudists or fan dancers, we cover it with clothes, parts of it. But we all of us occasionally set our bare faces against a 75 miles an hour wind; we go out into cold that is 30 to 50 degrees below zero; on a hot day we move about under a sun that is broiling at 120 degrees, when we can't stand a fever temperature of much over 105 degrees. And we do all sorts of work with our bare hands.

But we still don't know much about this skin of ours. Science has been concerning itself with our bones, our hearts, lungs and other vital organs; it hasn't been giving so very much attention to this thin layer of tissue that keeps our body from drying out. That, incidentally, is another function of the skin we don't always appreciate.

One thing, however, we have been finding out in the medical research laboratories of the University of Illinois, and that is that our skin is just about the most remarkable disinfecting agent there is. You can put all sorts of germs, millions of them, on clean healthy skin, and in a few minutes they have disappeared.

We discovered, though, that the skin has certain minute never-sterile areas, where the germs don't disappear. The first of these is the area under the finger nails. The second is the thin line that marks the junction of the outside skin of the lip with the membrane lining of the mouth. The third is the line where the outside skin joins the membrane lining of the nostrils. The fourth is the rim of the eyelid where the outside skin meets the inside lining. Perhaps this is why most eye infections occur on the rims of the eyelids.

The first experiments were made on the outside skin. The university laboratory assistants, all normal, healthy persons, were the subjects. This is how the experiments were conducted. When the chest, abdomen, back, legs or arms were studied, a piece of sterile gauze was moistened with bacterial culture and placed upon the skin area for one to three minutes. Then the gauze was removed and immediately after the skin was rubbed gently with a sterile cotton swab. This swab was then smeared over the surface of an agar plate, and the number of bacteria were counted. In five minutes another sample was taken, and then again in ten, fifteen, twenty, and thirty minutes. When the specimens were taken of the hands, the whole hand was submerged in the bacteria solution, and then specimens taken of the various sections to learn if one section was more resistant than another.

This is what we found: That 88 per cent of the thousands of bacteria that had been placed in contact with the skin disappeared from the skin within ten minutes. That there is one exception to the self-disinfection of the outside skin. This, as has already been stated, is the skin under the nails. Even after the thorough scrubbing and cleaning that the surgeon gives his hands before performing an operation, germs called staphylococci are always present in large numbers in these spaces.

Altogether eleven various kinds of bacteria were used in the tests, from the harmless E. coli to the germs that produce wound infections, lockjaw, boils, blood poisoning, typhoid and dysentery. The skin got rid of the dangerous germs just as quickly as it got rid of those that were harmless.

These tests were on clean skin. Then we experimented with skin coated with fat. Vaseline rubbed into the hands was used in one test. That retarded considerably the self-disinfecting power of the skin. Then naturally oily skin was next swabbed. That also did not work so well. Which may help account for the fact that persons with oily skin are apt to have trouble getting rid of skin eruptions.

Finally some plumbers and electricians were called in just as they were finishing their day's work and before they had washed. Their hands were of course grimy. The tests were applied before and after washing, with these results: After 10 minutes the dirty hands showed no reduction of bacteria; the clean hands had lost 85 per cent. After 20 minutes, the dirty hands had lost only 5 per cent of bacteria; the clean hands were entirely free. After 30 minutes the dirty hands still retained 85 per cent of their bacteria.

Next we removed a patch of outside skin to see whether the next layer of skin had the same resistance power. But it hasn't. The second layer of skin tissue has no more germ-resisting power than have the other tissues of the body. So our only hope of keeping germs out of the body is by keeping our outer layer of skin whole. We lower our resistance to disease when we have a case of sunburn or an open blister, or we get our hands chapped, prick ourselves with a pin, or any other happening that punctures the outermost layer of our epidermis.

A clean healthy skin needs no other assistance to protect itself against infection.

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## America's Oldest Deed

Believed the oldest in America, a deed dated 1687 and assigning an 11-acre strip of land on the Mohawk river is in the possession of Mrs. Albert C. Morenus, of Schenectady, N. Y. The ancient document is on real sheepskin and is inscribed in English script with what appears to be waterproof ink, says the Wall Street Journal. It is as legible as if it were written yesterday. Mrs. Morenus said the parchment was handed down in her family from father to son, until it came into possession of her father.

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