

ROBBERS' ROOST

by ZANE GREY

SYNOPSIS

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. Hays and others are plotting to steal their employer's cattle and money. With Hays, Jim Wall goes to Herrick's ranch. Hays and his lieutenant drive off a bunch of cattle. Heeseeman is Hays' rival among the cattle rustlers. Jim is sent to meet Miss Herrick. Hays betrays unusual interest in the girl's coming. Wall finds himself falling in love with Helen, and he fears Hays has designs on the girl. Jim coaches her in riding western style, and finally kisses her. She is angry and dismisses him, but relents and asks him to leave the ranch. Hays' men return from the drive, having the money. A quick getaway is imperative. Hays tells them to go on ahead, that he will join them. He comes, with Helen Herrick—a captive. Hays explains that he stole Helen for ransom. Realizing that Helen will be worse off if she falls into Heeseeman's clutches, Jim Wall does nothing. Heeseeman's riders come in pursuit. Hays leads the gang into a canyon retreat—The Robbers' Roost. In the "roost" Jim keeps a watchful eye on Helen. Heeseeman's riders appear. Helen is taken to a cave, and Hays and his followers prepare for the coming battle.

CHAPTER X—Continued

Scarcely had he gotten out of sight when Jim thought of the field glass. Smoky should have taken it. Jim risked going back to his pack to secure it, and had the fun of dodging another bullet.

What had become of Hays? Waiting alone among these deflecting bullets wore on Jim's mood. He decided to peep out of the hole again. To this end he climbed to the shelf, rifle in hand and the glass slung around his neck.

He could command every point with the aid of the field glass, without exposing his head.

An instant later a far-off shot thrilled Jim. That might be Smoky. Suddenly a dark form staggered up, flinging arms aloft, silhouetted black against the sky. That must be the sharpshooter. Smoky had reached him. Headlong he pitched off the cliff, to plunge sheer into the wash below. Smoky had at least carried out his idea.

Suddenly Jim espied Hays boldly mounting the slope. But it appeared that he had not been discovered yet. Those on top were facing the unseen peril to the west.

Jim marveled at the purpose of the robber chief. Still another shot from Smoky—the last! But Hays had reached high enough to see over. Leveling the rifle he took deliberate aim. Then he fired.

"Heeseeman!" hissed Jim, as sure as if he himself had held that gun.

Hays, working the lever of his rifle, bounded back and aside. Shots boomed. One knocked him to his knees, but he lunged up to fire again. Again he was hit, or the rifle was, for it broke from his hands. Drawing his two revolvers he leveled them, and as he fired one, then the other, he backed against the last broken section of the wall. Jim saw the red dust spatter from the rock above.

The shots thinned out and ceased. Hays was turning to the left, his remaining gun lowered. He was aiming down the slope on the other side. He fired again—then no more. Those who were left of Heeseeman's outfit had taken flight. Hays watched them, strode to the side of the big rock, and kept on watching them.

Soon he turned back and, sheathing one gun, took to reloading the other. It was at this moment that Jim relinquished the field glass to take up his rifle. With naked eyes through the aperture in the brush, he could see Hays finish loading his gun.

This moment, to Jim's avid mind, was the one in which to kill the robber. He drew a bead on Hays' breast. But he could not press the trigger. Lowering the hammer, Jim watched Hays stride up among the rocks, to disappear.

Jim leaped up out of the hole to have a better look. Far beyond the red ridge he discerned men running along the white wash. There were three of them, scattered. A fourth appeared from behind a bank, and he was crippled. He waved frantically to the comrades who had left him to fare for himself. They were headed for the cove where the horses still stood. And their precipitate flight attested to the end of that battle and as surely, to the last of Heeseeman's outfit.

CHAPTER XI

Jim picked up the field glass and slinging it on his elbow, essayed a descent into the cave. On the shelf he hesitated and sat a moment locked in thought. A second time he started down, only to halt straddling the notch. The battle had worked out fatefully and fatally. Would he see Smoky again? Yet nothing had changed the issue. The end was not yet. With his blood surging back to his heart, Jim leaped down to meet the robber chief.

"Where's Smoky?" called Jim, his lynx eyes on Hays' right hand.

"Cashed in," boomed Hays, fastening great hollow eyes of pale fire upon Jim. "He had cover. He plugged I don't know how many. But Morley's outfit had thrown in with Heeseeman. An' when that gambler Stud broke an' run Smoky had to head him off. They killed each other."

"Who got away? I saw four men; one crippled."

"Morley an' Montana fer two. I

didn't recognize the others. They shore run, throwin' rifles away."

"They were making for their horses, tied half a mile back. Where'll they go, Hays?"

"Fer more men. Morley is most as stubborn as Heeseeman. An' once he's seen this roost of ours—he'll want it, an' to wipe out what's left of us."

"Heeseeman?"

"Wal, he didn't run, Jim. Haw! Haw! He's dead."

The chief strode to the mouth of the cave and stared around. Jim remained at the spot he had selected, to one side, between the robber and Helen's covert.

"Jack an' Mac, too?" he ejaculated in amazement. "How come? No more of that outfit sneaked down in hysar."

"Mac stuck his noodle too far out of that hole in the cave. And Happy Jack stopped a glancing bullet. There's just two of us left, Hays. By the way—you going to bury your dead?"

"No. If I do anything at all it'll be fer my girl. Them stiff's ain't a pretty sight."

If Jim Wall needed any galvanizing shock to nerve him to the deed he had resolved upon, that single possessive word was enough.

"I'll bury them later," he said.

"Good. I'm all in. I climbed more'n a mile to git to them fellers." Hays sat down heavily, and ran his right



"Flesh Wound. Nothin' to Fuss Over This Minnit."

hand inside his shirt to feel of the bulge on his shoulder. Jim saw him wince. Blood had soaked through his shirt.

"You got hit, I see."

"Flesh wound. Nothin' to fuss over this minnit. An' I've got a crease on my head. That hurts like sixty. Half an inch lower an'—"

"I'd have been left lord of Robbers' Roost?"

"You shore would, Jim. Lousy with money, an' a girl to look after. But it jest didn't happen that way."

"No; it didn't. But it will!"

That cool statement pierced the robber's lethargic mind. Up went his shaggy head and the pale eyes, opaque, like burned-out furnaces, took on a tiny, curious gleam. When his hand came slowly down from inside his shirt the fingers were stained red.

"What kind of a crack was that?" he demanded, puzzled.

"Hays, you forget."

"You're sore that I didn't divvy square?"

"Hays, I take it you double-crossed me same as you did them."

"Uh-huh. Wal, you got me in a corner, I reckon. That's only two of us left. I'd be crazy to quarrel. . . . Would a third of my money square me?"

"No."

"It wouldn't. Wal, you air almin' at a bargain. Say half then?"

"No."

A tremor ran over the robber's frame. That was a release of swift passion—hot blood that leaped again. But he controlled himself.

"Air you tryin' to pick a fight with me?"

At this Jim laughed.

"Cause if you air, I jest won't fight. I'd be senseless. You an' me can git along. I like you. We'll throw together, hide somewhere a while, then build up another outfit."

"It can't be done."

"I'll give you two-thirds of the money."

"Hays, I wouldn't take another dollar from you—that you gave willing-ly."

Jim had turned his left side slightly toward Hays, concealing his right hand, which had slipped to his gun butt, with his thumb on the hammer! For Jim, Hays was as good as dead.

"It'll all be mine, presently," he replied.

"Holdin' me up, huh?" rasped Hays. "Learned to be a shore-enough robber, trallin' with me, huh?"

"Hays, I promised Smoky I'd kill you—which he meant to do if he had lived to come back."

The robber's face grew a dirty white under his thin beard. At last he understood, so much, at least. What volumes his stupidity spoke for his absorption! It changed, Jim's posture,

his unseen hand, suddenly loomed with tremendous meaning.

"Shore. That doesn't surprise me," admitted the robber. "When men's feelin's are raw, as in a time like this, they clash. But I did my share to clear the air. An' if Smoky had come back he'd have seen it different. I could have talked him out of it. . . . Jim, you're shore smart enough to see that, an' you oughter be honest enough to admit it."

"I darsay you could have won Smoky back. He had a fool worship for you. . . . But you can't talk me out of anything."

"Why, fer Gawd's sake—when I'm givin' you all the best of the deal?"

"Because I want the girl," thundered Jim.

A great astonishment held Hays stricken. Through it realization filtered.

"Thet! Thet was it—all the time!" he gasped.

"All the time, Hank Hays," replied Jim, steadily, and it was the robber's eyes, pale fires no longer, that he watched for thought and will.

Still he saw the violent muscular quivering which slowly diminished to freeze into rigidity. He had struck the right chord. In whatever way possible, Hank Hays loved this woman. However it had begun, the sordid, brutal thing had ended in Hays' worship of the golden-haired sister of Herrick. Jim read this in the extraordinary betraying eyes; and read more—that it had been Helen the robber had fought for, not his lost caste with his men, not the honor of thieves. It was this that accounted for the infernal blaze of unquenchable hate, of courage that death itself could scarcely have stifled.

All this immediately coalesced into the conscious resolve to act and kill!

As the robber sprang up Jim's first shot took him somewhere in the breast. It whirled him half around. His gun, spouting flame, tore up the gravel at Jim's feet. A terrible wound with its agony, a consciousness of its mortality, added to the overwhelming ferocity of jealous hate, gave the man superhuman physical activity. He whirled, bounding the other way, and so swiftly that Jim's second shot missed him altogether. Hays' gun was booming, but it was also describing the same curves and jerks as his body. Then as passion gave place to desperate need and the gun aligned itself with Jim, Jim's third shot destroyed aim, force and consciousness.

Hays' demonic face set woodenly. The gun, with hammer up, dropped to explode. And the robber lodged against the slant of wall, dead, with the awfulness of his mortal passion stamped upon his features.

It was over. Jim breathed. The hand which held his gun was so wet that he thought his blood was flowing. But it was sweat.

"I wish—Smoky could—know," muttered Jim, over a convulsive jaw. He shoved Hays off the wall.

Wiping his face, Jim staggered to the rock and sat down. Spent and heaving, he sat there, his will operating on a whirling mind. It was over—the thing that had had to come. All dead! Loyal and faithless robbers alike. What to do now? The girl! Escape from that hellhole, soon to be besieged again! He must pack that very hour and ride—ride away with her.

"Jim—oh, Jim!" came a cry from the back of the cave.

"Helen—it's all—over," he called, hoarsely.

She appeared in the opening. "Gone?" she whispered.

"Yes, gone—and dead."

"I—saw—you . . . is he—dead?"

"You bet your life," burst out Jim, his breast oppressed.

"Oh, help me out!"

He ran to assist her. She came sliding out, to fall on her knees, clasping Jim with fierce arms. Her head fell against him.

"Get up," he ordered, sharply, trying to lift her. But she was more than a dead weight.

"God bless you! Oh, God bless you!" she cried. The voice was husky, strange, yet carried the richness and contralto melody that had been one of Helen's charms.

"Don't say that!" he exclaimed, aghast.

"Jim, you've saved me," she whispered. Jim's hands plucked at her arms, caught them.

She loosened her hold and raised her head to look up at him. He saw only her eyes, tearless, strained in overwhelming gratitude.

"No—not yet!" he blurted out. "We must hurry out of this."

She arose, still clinging to him. "Forgive me. I am selfish. We can talk some other time. I should have realized you would want to leave here at once. . . . Tell me what to do. I will obey."

Jim stepped back and shook himself.

"You kept me from thinking," he began, ponderingly. "Yes, we must leave here. . . . Put on your riding clothes. Pack this dress you have on—and all you have. Take your time. We're safe for the present. And don't look out. I've got to bury Hays and the men."

TO BE CONTINUED.

Earth 330,000,000 Years Old

The earth is 330,000,000 years old and the universe is between 500,000,000 and 3,000,000,000 years old. These figures are reached by calculations on the radio-activity of lead, thorium and uranium.

Inspecting Christmas Toys



Christmas Gifts
By Luella B. Lyons

An Up-to-Date Santa Claus
By Florence Harris Wells

WITH more than a foot and a half of snow on the highway, the telephone lines down and not a chance of the mailman reaching them, Mary March bemoaned her negligence in putting off her Christmas shopping. And that very afternoon, the eight women of them living within a mile and a half of each other were to brave the drifts and hold their annual party, despite the weather.



"One nice book in the house that is fit to give, and that had to have a tiny hole burned right smack in the center of the lid, too," she wailed to Bob March. He tried hard to think of some way out of the situation, for he knew how much she usually counted on the annual party.

"I've just had an idea and I'd better care for it, being it's lonely," he declared rather excitedly. "Where's that sheet of cellophane you peeled so carefully from off that box of mine the other day? Haul that out, get me that snapshot you had printed to send to my sister, and by that time—well, who knows!"

Bob was always thinking up ways and means to cover up for her lack of planning and foresight, and she blessed him as she ransacked happily for the desired items. But when she again joined Bob at the kitchen table, she gave a startled shriek.

"Bob, dear, that was the only gift in sight and now you've ruined it," but he smiled on, his pen knife cutting away that messy looking burn from the book lid. Then with an old wood burning set, he stippled the whittled edge of that hole in the leather binding. Then he backed that hole with a double piece of cellophane and bound the three edges to the inner side of the book lid with a tiny band of purple leather which matched the book.

In between the cellophane pieces Bob slipped the lovely tinted snapshot of Mary. With a squeal of delight, Mary accepted the new deal in Christmas gifts. "The newest thing in fads, Bob, darling," she assured him delightedly. Such a tiny bit of work had turned a perfectly impossible gift into something rare that might have come straight from the gift shop.

And after the women had raved over Mary's gift to the grab bag, Bob was given the surprise of his life. "What will you charge, Bob, to make over two or three books for me that very same way. One or two for the youngsters, too," they exclaimed. Bob made every moment of his spare time count, doing over book-lids for a long time after that. "Bless your bad memory, darling," he teases every time he makes another entry in the cash book of this spare time job of his.

© Western Newspaper Union.

"THERE'S snow stretching as far as we can see in all directions. We've had no possible chance to get out the old car and rattle into town as we planned, and Christmas tomorrow." Tom Lambert looked questioningly across their breakfast table at his wife, Lucy: "Do you think we can make the children understand that even Santa Claus couldn't urge his tiny reindeer through such an expanse of snow?"

"I've talked to them about it but their faith is boundless." Lucy's usually cheerful voice had a break in it. "Yet how could we tell that it would snow so long and steadily. But you are better, Tom. We have that to be thankful for."

"Yes, I'm better. Anything is better than being shut up in a stuffy office all day for a man that is used to God's great outdoors. But forget me. It's those three kids I'm worrying about."

"Don't worry, Tom. Let's have the faith of the children. I'll pop corn and we still have a few apples and nuts for their stockings."

It was nearing noon when they heard the whirr of the mail plane over their heads. Mary, Robert and little Tom rushed out to wave greetings.

"Look! Look!" little Tom shouted. "Something's fallen out."

"Sure enough, a parachute had been released. Slowly but surely it descended towards the little group.

"It's going down the chimney!" Rob shouted. But it missed the chimney, hit the edge of the roof and came tumbling down in their midst, a gay umbrella of red and green, with a large white bag securely tied to it. Wired to the bunches of holly and evergreens, that bedecked the outside, was a card.

"An accurate guesser of distance, that pilot," Tom muttered as he unfurled the card. The children stopped tugging at the fastenings and listened attentively while Tom read:

"My reindeer couldn't navigate in such deep snow; so I'm sending your things by air mail, because the air mail man tells me you are such friendly children you must not be disappointed. — Santa Claus."

"I knew Santa Claus wouldn't forget us!" Rob shouted. "So did I," Mary and little Tom said in one breath. Lucy and Tom, Sr., looked at each other. "Some thoughtful pilot," Tom said soberly. Perhaps the air waves carried, to the fast disappearing plane, the "Merry Christmas" the little family shouted to their air man Santa Claus.

© Western Newspaper Union.

Housewife's Idea Box



Easy Way to Fill Cream Puffs
Cream puffs are easy to make and are delicious and nourishing. If you are filling them with whipped cream or a thick custard, use a pastry bag. You will find it more efficient than a spoon.

Electric "Ear" Converts

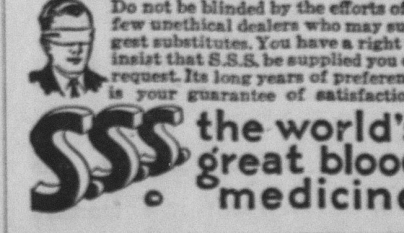
Heartbeats Into Light
Photographic records of pulsations of the human heart are produced by a portable instrument containing an electric "ear" and equipment for converting sound into light, says Popular Mechanics Magazine. The electric ear, a sensitive condenser microphone, picks up the heart's sounds, which are amplified until they can be heard through a radio loud speaker. The amplified sounds are converted into a vibrating light beam which is focused on a rapidly moving strip of photographic paper. At the same time, the light is projected on a ground glass screen on the control panel of the instrument, so that the light variations may be watched by the operator. Earphones enable the operator to hear the sounds at the same time. The strip of sensitized paper records the light variations, resulting in a long strip that tells the story of the heart beat, measured in one-hundred-thirtieths parts of a second. From this record a physician can observe regularity of the heart, determine any defect in operation of valves or muscles, measure comparative intensity of the different sounds of the heart beat, time the pulse and obtain other valuable information. The apparatus is contained in a case 8 inches wide, 12 inches high and 21 inches long. It weighs less than 38 pounds.

Barometric Hair

My nephew, aged two, has a head of curls which accurately forecast the weather. When they are tightly coiled rain always follows, when they relax into fine silken strands a spell of fine weather can be expected.—From a letter to the London, England, Sunday Express.

Appetite gone?

A simple thing, perhaps . . . yet a very serious one, resulting in loss of strength . . . body weakness . . . and possibly many other ills. So why not check-up and snap back to the zest of eating and well being. You will find S.S.S. a great, scientifically-tested tonic—not just a so-called tonic, but one specially designed to stimulate gastric secretions and also having the mineral elements so very, very necessary in rebuilding the oxygen-carrying hemoglobin of the blood to enable you to "carry on." Do try it. Unless your case is exceptional, you should soon enjoy again the satisfaction of appetizing food and good digestion . . . sound sleep . . . and renewed strength. Remember, "S.S.S. makes you feel like yourself again."



Do not be misled by the efforts of a few unscrupulous dealers who may suggest substitutes. You have a right to insist that S.S.S. be supplied you on request. Its long years of preference is your guarantee of satisfaction.

S.S.S. the world's great blood medicine

Do You Need Xmas Money?

You buy nothing; I buy for you. Details free. J. Dunn, 2324 Webster, St. Louis, Mo.

WE BUY Black Walnut Kernels

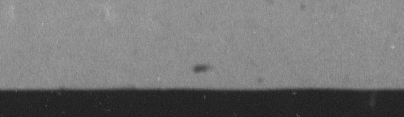
LARGE AND SMALL QUANTITIES. Write for Information and Prices R. E. FUNSTEN CO. - St. Louis, Mo.

CHERRY-GLYCERINE COMPOUND

For Coughs due to Colds, Minor Bronchial and Throat Irritations JAR. BAILY & SON, Baltimore, Md.

NIP THAT COLD

CLEANSE INTERNALLY. Doctors advise: "The moment a cold sets in, get quickly CLEANSE INTERNALLY." A cup of Garfield Tea will relieve congestion, help break the cold's hold. Incidentally cleans out the system, increases your resistance.—At drug stores—25c a jar.



GARFIELD TEA