

Cattle Kingdom

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By ALAN LEMAY

WNU Service

SYNOPSIS

Billy Wheeler, wealthy young cattleman, arrives at the 94 ranch, summoned by his friend Horse Dunn, its elderly and quick-tempered owner, because of a mysterious murder. Billy is in love with Dunn's niece Marian, whom he has not seen for two years. She had rejected his suit and is still aloof. Dunn's ranch is surrounded by enemies, including Link Bender, Pinto Halliday and Sam Caldwell, whom he has defeated in his efforts to build a cattle kingdom. Dunn directs his cow hands, Val Douglas, Tulare Callahan and others to search for the killer's horse. He explains to Billy that the morning before he had come upon bloodstained ground at Short Creek and found the trail of a shod and unshod horse. The shod horse's rider had been killed. The body had disappeared and no one was reported missing. Link Bender had arrived at the scene and read the signs the way he had. Dunn reveals that because of a financial crisis the ranch may be in jeopardy; his enemies may make trouble since Sheriff Walt Amos is friendly with them. He says he has asked Old Man Coffee, the country's best trail rider, to join them. Dunn and Billy meet Amos, Link Bender, his son "the Kid" and Cayuse Cayetano, an Indian trail rider, at Short Creek. Bender has found the slain man's horse, but the saddle is missing. Almost supernaturally, cattle attracted to the scene by the blood-stained ground, stamp out all the traces.

CHAPTER II—Continued

"The trail of the killer turned back from here," Dunn said. "It took to the creek. I tried to find where it came out of the creek. There was too many horse tracks from the range stock; I never found where it came out. While I was trying to trail it, Link Bender came by and I hailed him. After I showed him what I found he took off after the dead man's horse."

There was a long pause. "This all you fellows got to show?" the sheriff said at last.

"That's all," Dunn said. Link Bender nodded. "I lost the trail of the dead feller's horse," he said shortly. "I swung wide and found the horse further on, but I never seen the saddle."

The sheriff sat his horse for almost a full minute, as if in thought. He seemed about to speak, then apparently thought better of it. Silently he led back the way they had come. They were nearly back to Chuck Box Wash before anyone spoke.

"This is a pretty bad thing, Dunn," Amos said tentatively at last. "The big end of the Red Hills cowmen are pretty well stirred up."

"Funny," Dunn said dryly, "how quick the word got round."

They had come to the forking of their trails, where Dunn would turn westward toward his home ranch. They pulled up their horses.

"Dunn," the sheriff said, "you wasn't figuring to go any place, was you?"

"Amos," said Horse Dunn, "what you mean by that?"

The sheriff met his eye directly, but without pleasure. "I'll have to ask you not to leave the county, Dunn."

Horse Dunn was visibly angering. Suddenly Billy Wheeler remembered that Dunn was facing out something greater than two or three men on horses. Link Bender stood for a whole ring of half-whipped brands—the wolf ring, waiting hopefully on its haunches; Sheriff Amos represented a county. Behind these men were numbers and strength—and against the many the Old Man of the 94 stood opposed as a powerful thumb opposed the fingers of a hand.

"And so," Horse Dunn thundered, "you take it on yourself to tell me where I'll go and come!"

"There's plenty stuff has to be cleaned up," the sheriff said stubbornly. "One thing, why was those two known fellers riding toward the home ranch of the 94?"

"How do I know that?" Dunn demanded. "If they're like the average run of the Red Hills, they was most likely looking for something to steal!"

"All the more reason we have to know where you are," the sheriff retorted. "If it's a cow thief that's dead, who would shoot him on your range but you or one of your boys?"

"Not one of my neighbors," Horse Dunn let his eyes drift to Link Bender's face. "No, not them! They'd never make a move—unless it was to hand the feller his brander."

Instantly Link Bender said, "What do you mean by that?"

In the little moment before Horse Dunn's reply, Billy Wheeler glanced about him, noting the position of the men. Of them all, only Cayuse Cayetano appeared to be unarmed. Link Bender sat alongside the sheriff, but separated from him by the led horse. Wheeler saw him exchange a quick glance with his son, who sat detached, a little to one side.

With one spur Wheeler woke his pony, so that it moved sideways, nearer Kid Bender. No one noticed; their eyes were expressionless but intent upon Horse Dunn.

Dunn had swung slowly in his saddle to face Link Bender. "My calf crop is short, is what I mean."

Watching Kid Bender, Wheeler did not see Link make his play; but as Kid Bender's hand dropped to his holster, Wheeler knew that the Kid had taken his cue from Link, who in that instant must have gone for his gun. In the shock of action

Wheeler forgot his own weapon, which he had never drawn on any man. He jumped his horse at Kid Bender, striking down on the Kid's gun hand with his quirt. The quirt whistled and bit; as he jerked it back Wheeler felt the gun come with it, tangled in the snap of the lash.

In the same instant a gun roared behind him, and he whirled his pony.

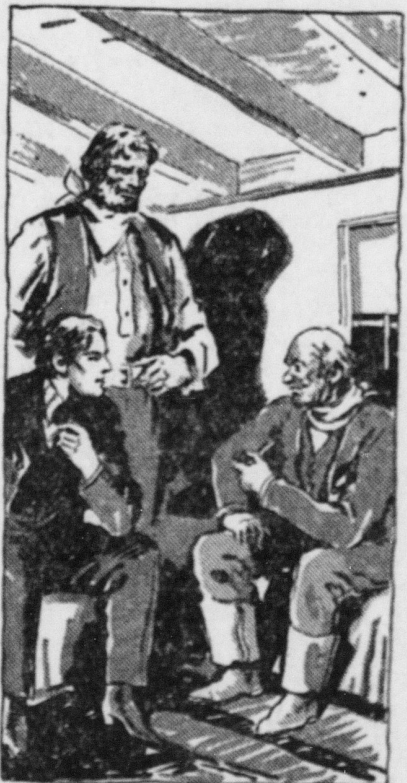
Horse Dunn held the smoking muzzle of his gun skyward, and steadied his half-stamped horse with his other hand. In his face was such a white blaze of fury as Wheeler had never seen. He was not roaring now; his words came through his teeth, hard-edged as broken rock. "I could have killed you," he said, almost as if he were strangling. "And I'd have done it, if only—"

Link Bender sat straight up, his face the dusty gray-green of the brush. Evidently he rode a gun-proof horse, for the reins hung slack on its neck, but it stood. Bender's left hand gripped his right arm; he swayed slightly, but recovered himself, and the color slowly began to come back into his face.

Sheriff Amos brought his hand empty away from the gun-butt to which it had dropped, and let both hands be seen in plain sight upon his reins. His face was discolored by a red flush. "You all right, Link?"

Link Bender said between set teeth, "Good enough."

"You go on home," Walt Amos said to Dunn. "I can't take you in



"Who Shot Who This Time?"

for this because I can't prove you were first to draw. But—"

Dunn said, "You know damn well who was first to draw!"

"Maybe I do and maybe I don't," the sheriff said. "But let me tell you this, Dunn: you've just about out your rope! By God, if ever a man overplayed his hand, you've sure overplayed yours! You go on home, and see that you stay where you can be got, until you hear from me!"

Horse Dunn grinned, showing his teeth. "I am home," he answered. "You fellows are the visitors here. Set off easterly, and ride steady, and maybe in three-four hours you'll be off my range! I'd start at it, if I was you."

He moved off a little way into the scant shade of a Joshua stalk; then sat where he was. Presently, still sitting there, he watched them ride away, losing shape in the heat waves and the dust.

Old Man Coffee surprised them all by coming in on a mule an hour after breakfast next morning. The Frying Pan Country from which he came was beyond the all but inaccessible Tuscaroras, and to reach the 94 by road or narrow-gauge would have called for nearly 800 miles of travel. Coffee, however, had apparently come by unsuspected short cuts; and he had come fast and hard, to judge by the ribby and droop-lipped condition of his black mule.

Marian Dunn had never seen an outfit like that of Old Man Coffee. Around the black mule as it shuffled to a stop, no less than six flop-eared dogs of a fox-hound type dropped to the ground. One of these, the leader, a big spotted hound with enormous jaws, wore a pack which seemed to contain a tightly-rolled blanket, a frying pan, and a coffee can with a hay-wire bale. Another, a grizzled ancient hound, astounded Marian because it was wearing deer-skin rock-moccasins, which looked to the girl as if the dog wore shoes—and socks.

The mule's saddle bore a high-power rifle, a pair of hobbles, a cowbell stuffed with leaves, and Old Man Coffee. The old lion hunter's face was of deep-seamed leather, from which deep-set eyes looked out penetratingly, but not unkindly. His

faded blue work clothes were like those of the cow hands, but he wore flat-heeled shoes instead of half boots, and instead of the broad Stetson of the cowboys, the mountain man wore slantwise on his bald head a battered hat of a narrow-brimmed, indiscriminate character.

"Don't you find riding a mule kind of slow?" Marian ventured. Coffee exchanged a brief glance with Horse Dunn. "Oh, sure," he said; "but what's time to a mule?" "A mule makes mighty good time in the hills, with a good mountain man on him," Horse explained to his niece. "See?"

Marian glanced at her big old uncle but didn't answer. To the best of Wheeler's knowledge she hadn't spoken to Horse Dunn that morning. Something had come between Horse Dunn and his niece, just since the day before. Horse had a baffled, apologetic look whenever he looked at her. It was wonderful how gentle and saddle-broke the tough Old Man seemed in the case of anything this slim, pale girl was mixed into.

Old Man Coffee, Horse Dunn, and Billy Wheeler sat in Horse Dunn's room and talked it over.

"Well," Old Man Coffee came to the point, "who shot who this time?"

Briefly, Horse Dunn explained to Old Man Coffee the curious circumstance by which they knew, or supposed they did, that a man was dead by violence—while still he did not know who he was. He described in some detail the ground marks which the cattle had now erased.

Coffee nodded. Billy Wheeler noted that Coffee, the man of dim trails which only dogs could find, did not question Horse Dunn's interpretation of the sign.

"And since when," Coffee inquired, "do you get so stirred up over a possible cow-thief shot?"

"It isn't that," Dunn told him. Horse Dunn now tried to explain to Old Man Coffee why Link Bender's coyote ring could be counted on to make the most out of a mystery killing as a weapon against the 94; but Coffee interrupted him.

"I take it, all you want me to find out," said Old Man Coffee, "is what happened to you, what for, and who done it. That cover it?"

"And where is the killer now," Dunn added.

Old Man Coffee locked bony fingers behind his bald head, and sat staring out the window. "Who's been over the ground?" he suddenly demanded.

"Walt Amos, the sheriff. Link Bender. His boy, they call the Kid. My cowboys here—though I didn't let them trample the sign. An Indian deer hunter by the name of Cayuse Cayetano."

Coffee pricked up his ears at the last name. "Cayetano," he repeated. "How long has this Cayetano been over here?"

"About two years, going on three. Had relatives among the Pintwater Piutes; they took him in."

"He used to be over in the Frying Pan Country," Old Man Coffee said. "What a sweet character he is! Got run out of the Frying Pan by common consent. That was about a year after he beat up the Chinese girl. He—"

"Can he track?"

"He couldn't track a barrel of tar through a—!" Coffee stopped. He looked angry and disgruntled. "No," he corrected himself, "that ain't so. He's a good tracker. He's better than that—he's a great tracker. Maybe the best I've ever seen."

"He's pretty good, is he?" asked Dunn.

"I think he can smell a cold trail like a hound," Coffee said grudgingly, "and make a fool of the hound. Or maybe he just guesses. But I can tell you this—Cayuse Cayetano will go through this case a-whistling."

"What's the answer then?"

"Oh, I suppose I'll have to go out

and take a look, and mess around, and make a fool of myself." Old Man Coffee growled. "First thing, I'll get it all right—if Cayetano hasn't got it, already. After that I'll find out where the killer's horse come out of the crick. That ought to be enough for one day; when I've done that I'll come home to supper."

"When you going now?" "Sure I'm going now. When did you suppose?"

"We'll go with you as soon as you're ready to start. I—"

"The hell you will," said Coffee. "I only got one dog that won't call me a fool if I tell him to trail a horse. That's old Rock, and he's funny. If he thinks people is watching him he flourishes around trying to look smart, and don't get anything done. Give me one cowboy that's seen the ground—one that'll come home when I send him. And you stay here."

"Oh, well," Horse Dunn grumbled, "suit yourself. I'm only the victim in this case."

"Well, give me a horse, give me a horse—we going to sit here all day?"

For once Horse Dunn did as he was told. Glumly he watched Old Man Coffee go jogging out of the layout, the black hound dogging it at the pony's heels.

"Will he find the saddle?" Wheeler asked.

"I suppose so," said Horse Dunn gloomily. "But damnation! Much as it means to me, I pretty near hope he won't. The cocky old snort!"

"I guess I'll saddle a pony and take a look around here myself," Wheeler said.

"Wait a minute," Horse Dunn said. "There's something different I want you to do."

Billy Wheeler waited, but Horse Dunn seemed to hesitate. "I wish," he said at last, slowly, "I wish you'd talk to that girl."

Wheeler was startled. "Talk to her? About what, Horse?"

"Well, I'll tell you," Horse Dunn gaped. "It's this way. He hesitated; out among the barns could be heard the grief-stricken hullabaloo of the hounds Coffee had left behind.

"You two had some kind of a fall-out, didn't you?" Wheeler asked.

"You might call it that," Horse Dunn shrugged. "She doesn't understand the way you have to handle things on this range. And now she's down on me for blasting Link Bender free of his gun."

Marian Dunn had been born in this house in which they now sat; she was the daughter of Horse Dunn's brother who had once run the 94. But her father had died when Marian was five years old, and, so far as Wheeler knew, Marian Dunn had since visited the 94 but once in her life—two years ago, when she was eighteen.

"Why, she can't hardly even believe that this country is here," Dunn continued. "They've taught her that the country is all settled up—and they're right. Only, they don't understand this dry country, where a steer walks a rod for a blade of grass, and a hundred square miles supports one outfit. When they think of the West they think of some place like Montana, where you can fence a whole herd on five sections of grass and watch 'em thrive. She can't see her 94 as part and parcel of half a million miles of range."

"Her 94?" Wheeler questioned. Horse Dunn did not hear him. "I've fought this country since time out of mind. When you got enemies in this country you've got to rough 'em and force 'em. If a man tries to smash you, you got to smash him first. She tells me we got law here to take care of that, nowadays. I tell you the law we got hasn't the teeth in it that it had in the old days, even!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

What Irvin S. Cobb Thinks about Cures for Communism.

SANTA MONICA, CALIF.—A certain rich man out here—rich but indulgent—got a letter from his heir, a sophomore at one of the big eastern colleges.

The lad announced he had been converted to communism and was contributing to the cause. So what about it?

The old man wrote back: "Son, you have a perfect right to follow the dictates of your conscience. But as a consistent communist you naturally would not continue to live on the ill-gotten gains of a wicked money-grabber. Today I am cutting off your somewhat generous allowance. You will also vacate the luxurious apartment you now occupy because I'm not paying the rent of same any longer. So go ahead, my boy, and commune freely—with my blessings! But from date that'll be about all from this end of the line."

Exactly four hours after the arrival by air mail of this ultimatum, the hard-hearted parent got back a rush telegram stating that the young man had been thinking things over and had decided not to take up the new doctrine.

The Art of Listening. WE HAD a party at which there appeared what I may call the dumb poets—Sam Hoffenstein and Ogden Nash. At the studios where they're both turning out epics, there's a rule that neither shall burst forth into poetry while he's under contract—no thumbing of the harp, no sounding of the lute. Cinema's gain is creation's loss.

Maybe that explains why they make such good listeners the other night. And isn't a good listener a boon! I don't mind being interrupted, provided the interrupter chooses the right subject. Mute and rapt, I can harken for hours on hours if someone is talking about me, say, or even reading from my published works. But these two minnesingers only broke in to ask that the pickled shrimp be passed or gently to suggest that another little drink or two wouldn't do any harm.

Ogden Nash has attained the highest peak of distinction attainable for a writer. His chief imitator has an imitator who is bringing up his oldest boy to be an imitator.

Resurrecting Old Words. WHEN a word gets fashionable—especially a new word which some wordsmith thought up right out of his head—it gets too doggone fashionable. The same applies to old words which have been disinterred from their forgotten tombs in the dictionary.

I seem to see grave robbers prowling through the unabridged, starting in at "sard-vark," which is an animal formerly common only to Africa but not frequently found in cross-word puzzles; and working on through to "zythum," a very strong beer drunk by ancient tribes. I guess those old-timers imbibed copiously of the brew and then named it. It doesn't sound like the sort of word a dead sober party deliberately would make up.

Do you remember the run "intrigued" had? I never got so sick of a word in my life. And then along came "provocative," and it turned out to be a pest. People went around just looking for a chance to work "provocative" into the conversation. The only way to lick 'em was to pretend to be deaf and dumb.

And now the reigning favorite is "allergic." Folks spout it everywhere, whether they know what it means or not. I don't mind saying I'm getting awfully allergic to "allergic." There must be many others like me.

Campaign Books. LET us not cavil too much because high pressure salesmen, working on commission, have been unloading upon the faithful, at fancy prices, the gift book put out by Washington headquarters to pay off campaign debts. In fact, 15 cents' worth would cover practically all the cavil I personally have used up in this connection.

The result tends to prove the gratifying fact that, while more Democrats may not necessarily have learned how to read and write, obviously more of us have got money than formerly was the case when the Republicans were in power.

Besides, think of what the strain would have been upon the poor postman if the national committee had been stuck with all this bulk literature and congressmen had started franking copies out to their constituents with Uncle Sam paying the freight. To give you a further idea about this franking privilege, I may state that it was named for Frank, Jesse's brother—and you'll remember how careless those James boys were with the United States mails!

IRVIN S. COBB.

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Household Questions

Use for Old Shaving Brush—A discarded shaving brush makes a splendid blacklead brush, as it penetrates parts which are difficult to reach with an ordinary stove-brush.

Rhubarb Charlotte—Wash and stew rhubarb but not to breaking point. Fill dish alternately with rhubarb and sponge cake and cover with lemon jelly. Leave to set and serve with whipped cream.

Eggs and Mushrooms—Put 2 ounces of fresh butter into a stew-pan; break over it 4 fresh eggs, and add 3 spoonfuls chopped mushrooms, ½ teaspoonful salt, 1 saltspoonful ground white pepper. Stir the mixture with a wooden spoon over a clear fire until of a thickish consistency, and serve very hot on buttered toast.

Laundry Hint—Transfer marks left after a piece of embroidery is completed may be taken out before the article is squeezed through in warm water by rubbing gently with a piece of cotton wool moistened with methylated spirit.

When Dressmaking—Keep a bottle of eucalyptus oil handy, as it removes grease and machine oil from any fabric.

Picnic Steaks—Mince finely ½ pound tender steak, add ½ table-spoonful finely-chopped onion, 1 table-spoonful breadcrumbs, 1 beaten egg, ½ teaspoonful salt, ¼ teaspoonful pepper. Knead the ingredients well together, shape into rounds about 1 inch thick, place on a greased baking dish with dabs of margarine on top, and bake in a moderate oven for about 20 minutes. When cool, wrap each in a lettuce leaf and pack in carton.

For Boiled Ham—When boiling ham add a small teaspoonful of vinegar and a few cloves to the water. This will improve the flavor. If the ham is allowed to cool in the water in which it was boiled it will be moist and sweet.

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Mother's Loving Heart

WHAT memories we have of faithful hearts, Who thought "the world well lost," and gave their best;

Who saw the hidden virtues in each child, Whose love was comfort, peace and perfect rest. Dear mothers of the world, and of today,

Your path in life may seem a humble part, But ask each man to choose life's purest gift, I know he'll say—"A mother's loving heart."

—Omar Randall.

Remember This When You Need a Laxative

It is better for you if your body keeps working as Nature intended. Food wastes after digestion should be eliminated every day. When you get constipated, take a dose or two of purely vegetable Black-Draught for prompt, refreshing relief.

Thousands and thousands of men and women like Black-Draught and keep it always on hand, for use at the first sign of constipation. Have you tried it?

BLACK-DRAUGHT
A GOOD LAXATIVE

So to Speak

The girl who marries a man with money to burn makes a good match.

Black Leaf 40 KILLS LICE
JUST A DASH IN FEATHERS... OR SPREAD ON ROOSTS

Ma! I got my name in the paper!

Only Newspapers bring the news of vital interest to you

Headlines may scream of death and disaster without causing you to raise an eyebrow. But if your son gets his name in the paper—that's real news!

It isn't by accident that this paper prints so many stories which vitally interest you and your neighbors. News of remote places is stated briefly and interpreted. Local news is covered fully, because all good editors know that the news which interests the readers most is news about themselves.

Now is a good time to learn more about this newspaper which is made especially for you. Just for fun ask yourself this question: How could we get along without newspapers?

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