Cattle Kingdom

By ALAN LE MAY

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. Link Bender had arrived at the scene and read the signs the way he had. rider had been killed. The body had disappeared. 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 trailer, to join them. Dunn and Billy meet Amos, Link Bender, his son "the Kid" and Cayuse Cayetano, an Indian trailer, 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. Dunn is angered when Amos tells him not to leave the county. Following an argument, Bender draws his gun, but Dunn wounds him in the arm. Back at the ranch Old Man Coffee arrives, with a pack of hounds. Coffee goes in search of the dead man's saddle. Dunn tells Billy that Marian is incensed at him for trying to settle disputes by bloodshed. for trying to settle disputes by bloodshed. He reveals that the ranch is really hers, also that he recently sold his own ranch in Arizona and that his partner. Bob Flagg, is en route with the money. Billy accompanies Marian on a ride to Short Creek, "Kid" Bender, now a deputy, rides to They have an argument. They have an argument.

CHAPTER III-Continued

Kid Bender's quirt-marked hand flashed to his gun. For the second time in two days Wheeler forgot his own unaccustomed weapon. The horses were neck to neck, facing each other; and now Wheeler, slamming the rowels into his own pony, grabbed at the spade bit of Kid Bender's horse.

Kid Bender's gun exploded skyward as the Kid's horse reared straight up, driven over backwards by the plunge of Wheeler's pony against the cruel bit. For an instant Bender's pony fought for its balance on its hind legs. Then together horse and man went down.

Wheeler whirled his pony aside: and now he drew at last, and turned the muzzle of his cocked gun upward, ready.

Bender's horse struggled up and bolted, bucking against the loosened saddle; but the man lay quiet where he had gone down.

CHAPTER IV

Val Douglas, wagon boss for the 94, leaned against the red rock fireplace of the main room of the ranch house, and looked at Billy Wheeler without admiration. "Now you've done it," he said; "oh, you've done it now, all right!"

"I won't ask you what you'd have done in my place," Wheeler said, "because I don't give a hoot. But I'll say this-if you had done much differently it would be because you're a worse fool than I thought." It was many hours now since Billy Wheeler had upset Kid Bender's

horse, pinning that newly-made deputy sheriff under the saddle; the long peculiarly lucid twilight of the Red Hills country now lay cool and lingering upon the range. But report of the clash with Kid Bender had been delayed by Horse Dunn's absence.

Horse Dunn and his wagon boss had now heard the story of the order Kid Bender, had given Wheeler, and Wheeler's refusal; and of how the Kid had tried to trick Wheeler into glancing away while he drew. There had been a bad moment for Wheeler after he had overthrown the Kid's horse, for at first Kid Bender had looked as if he might be dead, saddle - crushed by his fallen mount.

Kid Bender, though, had come to with only a broken leg and a dirty crack on the head to show. And Pinto Halliday, shifty-eyed, lanky, had appeared from the Short Creek cuts to take Kid Bender off of Wheeler's embarrassed hands. Halliday, it appeared, was another newly-made deputy. Evidently he had been the other half of the Short

Creek patrol. "No show-off play like that ever does any good," Douglas said. "It only stacks trouble onto plenty we

already got." At the window Horse Dunn stirred impatiently. "Understand this, Val," he said. "Billy done just what I would have done in a like case. I'll back Billy's play to the limit, and that goes for any other play he wants to make!"

'Sure," said Douglas. "What else can we do?"

Wheeler sat up, angering again. "Now just a minute!"

Horse Dunn whirled. "Cut it out," he snapped. "Val, that was Old Man Coffee just come in; go take care of his horse, and see that there's grub laid out at the cook shack.'

When Val Douglas had gone out Billy Wheeler's anger left him. "He's mostly right, Horse," he said.

Horse Dunn bristled and his voice rose to its familiar roar. "All I'm sorry for is you didn't kill the little "Not altogether and complete," sneak! If I had a couple more rid- Coffee retorted. "Rock quit cold-

ers with enough guts in their bellies to-" His thunder subsided; Wheeler noticed how all the hard fire went out of this old man in the presence of his niece. Marian Dunn sat relaxed at the other window, her eyes in the far hills, and her profile was as motionless as if she were carved of cream-colored marble. Billy Wheeler had that day seen horror and antipathy in her eyes after he had downed Kid Bender; and he no longer wondered why Horse Dunn lost spirit sometimes when she was there.

Horse Dunn mumbled in obscure apology, "We're right sorry. Things sometimes go like this. But sometimes we can't help it if they do. If only Bob Flagg would get here-"

Marian Dunn gave no sign of having heard, and there was an awkward silence. Then Old Man Coffee came stalking across from the corrals, dropped a saddle from his hip to the gallery floor, and let himself

"Val Douglas says that Billy Wheeler, here, stirred up a little extra hell today," he said without preliminaries.

Horse Dunn grunted, and Wheeler briefly explained to the old lion hunter what had happened. "Well," Old Man Coffee said, "I

reckon Marian can testify she seen him go for his gun." Marian did not verify this. After a moment Horse Dunn said, "I suppose you didn't find anything, or

you'd be saying so." "I'd sure like to catch up with



"How'd You Lay Hands on That?"

"Today I seen him riding a horse to death, some northward, toward the Red Sleep. I'd sure like to know what he was at."

"You worry plenty about that Indian, don't you? If-'

"He knows too much, too soon," Coffee complained. "Why wasn't he promoting the Short Crick trails, like me? Something funny about this Cayuse, Horse.'

"So you lost out," Horse accused

Old Man Coffee eased himself onto the most uncomfortable chair in the room, and there draped himself angularly. "If there's anything in the world makes me mad," he said morosely, "it's a cussed fool hound."

The droop-eared old lion dog which had followed Coffee in looked at him mournfully, and flopped to the floor with a great rattle of elbows, but made no remark. "I set out to trail the killer's horse," Coffee went on. "I took off down-crick: Rock seeking the trail where it come out of the water. Pretty soon he says he's got it, and sets up a beller, and away we go, inching along about two miles an hour. That fool hound takes anyway six, eight miles, all the time hollering just as confident as if he knew what he was at."

Old Man Coffee crammed cut plug into an ancient pipe, the bowl of which was carved to represent hearts and flowers.

'Well?" Dunn demanded at last. "All this time," Coffee said, "I hadn't been able to make out a decent track; but I was getting kind of suspicious because of the way the trail wandered around. Then finally we come on a soft place, where I could see plain. And it was the wrong trail."

"I thought this dog couldn't be fooled," Dunn grunted.

"He was sure fooled this time. The trail your wagon boss showed me was off a cup-hoofed pony; the hoofs showed nail splits. But old Rock took after a pony that was about 100 feet, but the average divflat-footed as a duck-his feet wore down right onto the frog."

"So," Horse Dunn said, "you ended up empty-handed, same as us ordinary folks!"

wouldn't work no more. But I took and unraveled the other trail by hand." He stepped out onto the gallery and came back with the saddle, which he now threw down among them in a tangle of broken strappage. "There," he said casually, "is the death saddle you was inquiring after."

Billy Wheeler heard Marian's breath jerk through her teeth. In the failing light her eyes looked surprisingly dark.

"Good Lord!" said Dunn. "How'd you lay hands on that?"

"Why, I followed the trail of the dead man's horse, until I come to the place he rolled loose from it. How'd you suppose?'

Horse Dunn had dropped to his knees beside the saddle. None of them had realized how deep the room was in twilight until it was brightened by the flare of the match he struck. For a long moment Horse Dunn studied the old worn leather, until the flame burned to his finger tips and went out. He stood up slowly. "You know that saddle?'

"No," said Wheeler. "Do you?" Behind Horse Dunn's shaggy face the muscles were stiffening slowly, so that although his features remained in some sense a mask, his eyes presently began to gleam with the white heat of the anger which he could not repress. "Yes," he

Yet he did not immediately answer their unspoken question. He turned to the window again, and for a little while stood looking out as if he could not yet trust himself to speak. Out behind the barns, Coffee's five other hounds were churning the quiet twilight with mournful bellowings, and for a little while they all seemed to be listening to that. Then Marian got up and went quietly from the room, and for once her uncle seemed glad to have her

"Here they're setting out to put the hooks to me," Horse Dunn said at last-"hunting a strangle holt on my brand. And it's a shameful thing that this should come onto us because somebody rubbed out maybe the most worthless character that ever rode the Red Hills range." "You know the name?" said Old

"What's his name matter?" Horse unn exploded Magoon-and what of it? A cow thief-in a small, cheap way. He'd go around on different ranges, and he'd steal a beef here, and another there; skin 'em and sell 'em to some butcher a hundred miles away for half price."

"Horse," said Coffee, "who would have killed this man?"

"Anybody!" Horse Dunn roared. 'Any cowman with enough guts to rub out a cow thief! I ought to've killed him myself last time I caught him with the carcass of a 94 cow!" "Did you know he was operating

on this range?" "What's the difference if I did or not? We know it now. Billy, you

take that saddle, and kick it under my bunk!" 'You better turn it in to the sheriff, Horse," Coffee said. "You'll be suppressing evidence if you keep it

here." "Damned if I will!" Horse Dunn said. "All they want is to hang this thing on the 94-on me. You think I called you in to help 'em? No, by God!"

Tulare Callahan was a small man. very wiry, with a cheerfully hard face. He had relieved Steve Hurley, who for three days had kept an eye on the state of affairs at the county seat of Inspiration, and he now came roaring into the 94 layout in Horse Dunn's heavy old touring car. He was grinning with the delight of an action-hungry man who smells smoke at last.

"I hear Billy Wheeler like to murdered a guy," said he.

"Billy Wheeler slapped Kid Bender with a horse," Dunn said. "You come all the way back here to tell us that?"

"I thought maybe you might want to hear the upshot," Tulare said. "The sheriff's coming out to get Wheeler, either tonight or first thing in the morning. He's going to throw him in the jug."

"What's the charge against Billy?" Horse asked. "Assault with a deadly weapon."

"Billy didn't assault him with anything!" "The heck he didn't," Old Man Coffee put in. "Didn't he hurl the

Kid's horse at him?" "The town is full of small-time cowmen and their professional calf thieves," Tulare reported. "Seems like every guy in the country that has it in for the 94 is swarming into Inspiration. I bet there's 20 guys that's tried to get themselves made deputies. If Walt Amos called for a posse he could easy raise a hundred

"So they figure to arrest Billy Wheeler," Dunn said.

men.

"They can't hold him," Coffee said. "I suppose Kid Bender will run in Pinto Halliday as a witness, and they'll all lie to beat the cards. But what good will it do 'em? Marian was there. Billy's got a witness that can make a fool of 'em in any court in the world."

Marian Dunn said, almost under her breath but very clearly, "I can't testify.'

Horse Dunn looked startled. "What's that?" he demanded. "I didn't see anything," Marian "I don't know how the fight started. Billy just suddenly jumped his horse at the other horse, and it went over backward. That's all I saw.

Horse Dunn turned to her. He seemed puzzled, but very quiet. "Marian," he said, "didn't you hear Billy tell what happened? How Kid Bender went for his gun?"

The girl said, "Yes, I heard him." "I've known Billy Wheeler since he had to shin up a horse's leg to get on. You think he'd lie to us here?" "No; I didn't say I thought he

"Then what's to stop you from backing him up?"

in the girl's eyes showed some thing Billy Wheeler had never seen there before. Her face was as gentle and lucid as the face of a child; but though her eyes were troubled there was a sober strength behind them as immutable in its way as the rocky will of Horse Dunn. "I can't swear to something I

didn't see." Horse Dunn looked at her, then turned away and let his hands fall in a gesture of utter futility. His eyes turned to Billy Wheeler. "You see?" he said. "You see?"

Old Man Coffee broke the awkward pause. "Look here," he said. "There's something about this I don't get. Yesterday you shot Link Bender through the arm, Horse, right before the sheriff's eyes. Nothing comes of that. How is it the sheriff lets that pass, yet jumps in with both feet the minute Billy Wheeler raises his hand in self defense?"

"You want to know the answer?" Horse Dunn demanded. "He didn't take me because he hasn't got the guts to take me. What, haul me in on a charge like that? He knows it can't be done! What he fails to allow for now is that the 94 will back Billy Wheeler just the same as if he'd been here all his life. When he finds that out you'll see him drop

"I'm not so sure," said Old Man Coffee again. "You're not sure? Look at it,

man!"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"Skin" Divers Still Seek Pearls in California Gulf; Suit Is Introduced

Diving for pearls in the Gulf of | about the introduction of a simple Spanish conquest. Doubtless the were found among the jade and gold ornaments in the tomb of an Indian chief opened at Monte Alban during 1931, were taken from the waters of this gulf, observes a writer in the New York Times. In recent years pearls found in these waters have equaled those found at Monte Alban in beauty but not in size.

The divers, armed only with a knife, descend feet first to a distance about twice their own height, then turn and swim to the bottom. Some can stay submerged for two to three minutes at a depth of metry, luster and tint. er does not remain under water for more than a minute at a time. It is a hazardous life, for not only is there extreme physical hardship but also constant danger from sharks and octopuses.

Lower California is carried on by diving suit that not only allows the 'skin' divers in the same way in diver a longer time to gather oyster which their ancestors sought for shells but lessens the danger of pearls in the days long before the paralysis. Too, sharks are more easily eluded by the man in a pearls, "big as pigeon eggs," that diver's suit. But these suits are relatively expensive and boys most often start as "skin" divers. Any day may bring wealth to the diver, so there is a certain elan in the air that is felt through the time when diving brings merely a bare liv-

Mexican government experts are supervising the propagation of pearl oysters in the bay near La Paz. It takes years for the tiny granule of sand or parasite which is the base of the pearl to be coated with nacre by the oyster. The value of the pearl depends upon its sym-

Sullivan's Last Fight The last fight of the famous John L. Sullivan was in defense of London prize ring title on July 8, 1889. He fought Jake Kilrain in Richburg, Miss., and he won the fight in the The physical hardship has brought | seventy-fifth round.

The Big Book Craze.

SANTA MONICA, CALIF.— We're promised a historical novel longer than any yet-say half a million words or so. Of course, the author probably uses some words at least twice, but that won't reduce the gross tonnage unless they're very short words.

I can't take it. While still convalescent from "Anthony Adverse,"

I was stricken down by "Gone With the Wind" and had such a relapse that even now I barely can hold on my stomach such comparatively light and trifling stuff as volume VET to ZYM of the encyclopedia.

When reading this modern bulk literature, it upsets me to Irvin S. Cobb find my legs going to sleep before I do. And the constant pressure makes callouses on

my second mezzanine landing. I admit these mass production books serve nicely as door stoppers and for pressing wild flowers. I also heard of a chap who detected a prowler under his window and dropped a frothy little work of fiction weighing slightly less than nine pounds on the back of the fellow's neck, dislocating three vertebrae. At last accounts, the surgeons were still picking long jagged chapters out of his spine.

In my present mood, what I crave is the romantic stuff of olden days, in which our sainted Aunt Sophie was wont to inscribe "Alas, how sad!" or "Only too true!" in pale violet ink on the margins. What happened to all the Aunt Sophies, anyhow?

An Actor's Temperament.

WE'VE all been waiting for something to top it, but the best wheeze of the month remains the one that was emitted, not by a paid gagster, but by a simple stagehand at one of the studios when Mr. Leslie Howard refused to go on making a picture until a group of distinguished visitors, including Mr. Charles Norris, the novelist, had been shooed off the set.

"He ain't sore at you gents," stated the stage-hand to the ousted parties, "but he's been playin' 'Hamlet' on the regular stage and he ain't used to havin' a crowd watchin' him

while he's actin'." If Mr. Norris and his friends want ed to see some really great acting they should have patronized the professional wrestling matches. That's where they put on the heavy dramatic stuff-beautifully rehearsed. perfectly done.

Children's Education

LIKE the way the wealthy classes in England rear their children. Little Rosemary doesn't recite for the company after dinner, and if Master Jones-Terwillager Minor gets uppity at school, he gets thrashed.

Many a rich American has known how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to see his daughter grow up a wanton and his boy turn out a waster. Yet, with few exceptions-so few that the newspapers comment on them-it never seems to occur to these fond fathers that less of coddling and pampering and spoiling in adolescence and more of wholesome discipline might produce

a higher average grade of heirs. What set me to thinking along this line was being t'other night at a party where a poor little four-yearold, having already the pitiable assurance of a veteran prima donna, was fetched in to give impersonations. She never again could impersonate natural babyhood though. more's the pity! And her pert small brother was encouraged to dominate the talk.

Mark my word for it, that kid is going to come to no good end-not even a well-spanked end, which would help.

Mr. Pincus' Coup.

IN THESE topsy-turvy times liberal-minded patriots who are striving to steer a middle course between ultraenthusiastic left-wingers and ultraconservative rightists might do well, methinks, to follow the example set by Mr. Pincus.

Mr. Pincus had opened a clothing store. Immediately on one side of him was the clothing store of Mr. Ginsberg and immediately on the other side was the clothing store of Mr. Dreifus; and three clothing stores in a row were too many even for Essex street.

So the adjacent competitors framed a plot to put the newcomer out of business. Next morning their rival, coming down to open up, found over Mr. Dreifus' establishment a flaming legend, to wit:

BANKRUPT SALE And above Mr. Ginsberg's door was this equally prominent announcement:

CLOSING OUT SALE Within an hour, smeared across the entire front of Mr. Pincus' store, exactly in between the other two, appeared a huge sign reading as follows:

MAIN ENTRANCE. IRVIN S. COBB. -WNU Service

Uncle Phil &

Unwanted Effect

Sometimes a soft answer can be so utterly soft as to loose one's wrath instead of turning it away. Yea, tolerance can be mere lazi-

People do not loosen up on the purse-strings until you reach their heart-strings.

Many may feel that their days are full of chores and bores. Two hours to pursue one's absorbing hobby makes any man's

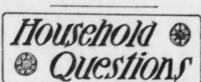
day happy. Flattery vs. Spite Talk

All flattery is delivered with the idea of pleasing, which makes it superior to the kind of converse

spread in the spirit of spite. Peace of mind and approximate happiness might perhaps be any man's who will live a well-nigh hermit life; but the poor chap hasn't the fortitude to do it.

be decent if he will be quiet about it and not shout. How many have discretion enough not to disagree with others when it doesn't matter?

No man is criticized in trying to



Cleaning Brass .- Never use vinegar to clean brass. Though it cleans at first, it soon causes tarnish. The proper materials for cleaning brass are oil and rottenstone.

Removing Tobacco Stains .- Tobacco stains may be removed from washable materials by moistening with lemon juice and bleaching in the sun.

When Preserving .- Don't pack jars too tightly when preserving fruits and vegetables. Leave a space of at least half an inch at the top for liquid.

Egg as Cleanser .- The yolk of egg may be used for removing mud, chocolate or coffee stains from any kind of material except velveteen. Rub into the stain, wash off with warm soapy water, and rinse thoroughly.

Treating Dry Glue. - Vinegar added to dry glue will make the glue fit for use again. WNU Service.

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