

marked man

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By H. C. WIRE

WNU SERVICE

THE STORY THUS FAR

Summoned to the C C ranch in central Nevada, desert-wise Walt Gandy is on his way to help his old range partner, Bill Hollister. Riding through unfamiliar country, Walt is stopped short by a girl who holds a rifle in firing position. She knows him, tells him how to get to the ranch, and tells him that they will meet again. Walt is allowed to ride on. Within a quarter of a mile from his destination, Walt is stopped again. This time by a grotesque, misshapen man who tells him to get out and then tells him the C C crew is in Emigrant, the closest town, for an inquest. Someone has been murdered. Riding to the inquest in Emigrant, Walt leaves his horse at the livery stable.

CHAPTER III—Continued

Walt Gandy flipped the reins over Sunspot's head. "Hay," he directed briefly. "No grain."

"Yes, sir," said the attendant. By the limp gray hat, peaked up Mexican fashion, he knew this stranger was from near the border. His eyes slid over the tanned poker face, down the straight hard length of body, back to the face. Somehow, though he did not want to, he had to look at that face and meet its dark, compelling gaze. Hastily he said again, "Yes, sir."

"I'll be back," said Gandy. "Keep him ready. Slip the cinch but leave the saddle on." He stepped to the doorway and glanced along the street.

Walt crossed the street, moved quickly on into the next block and reached a press of men that overflowed from the audience inside Gospel Hall. The Hall was a store building with sales counters removed, and through the glass front he could look upon the pack within. A drifting haze of cigarette smoke filled the room. There was nothing definite to be made out over the heads of those seated upon the gospel benches. For a time he stood shading his face with both hands, peering in, yet only vaguely saw the principal figures up front where, behind a long table, the coroner was putting his questions.

He thrust farther in among the watchers at the doorway; asked as a ranchman turned to look at him, "Inquest decided anything yet?"

The man spat down between his boot toes. "Nothin' to decide, mister. Cash Cameron has got himself in a hole!"

Grim satisfaction rang in the voice, and Walt Gandy shifted his gaze away, brown eyes narrowing. What was this now? Cash Cameron was in a hole. The fellow here was glad of it!

His mind flicked over what Bill Hollister had written about Cameron, the cattleman who had made himself king of this range not by the old method of gunplay, but by the power of the ready dollar. "Cash" was his byword and had become his name. He avoided credit as if it might be something that crawled and had rattles on its tail. Owed no one; let no one owe him. "Cash on the barrel-head," was his expression. "Cash, I'm offering." "How much, for cash?"

Banks and bankers he had no use for. Where he kept his hoard was a frequent matter of lonely campfire speculation. No one knew; but he had it and many a small rancher, pinched for money, had sold cattle and land to Cameron because of dollars ready on the spot. Naturally they sold cheap, and Cash Cameron took the profit.

Cameron, Walt Gandy knew, was on the square. At least Bill Hollister had given him no reason to believe otherwise. Yet sooner or later a man like that made enemies. His growth would stick in the craws of those who had been forced by circumstance to sell to him. They would hold on at the fringes of his increasing domain, cursing their own luck and hoping for a day when his word broke.

A stir on the far edge of the crowd turned him. A ranchman, with two women in starched white dresses and a small boy, was pushing into the outer air from Gospel Hall. There was a shifting of men to take their places in the room. It seemed a chance of forcing an entrance. Walt stepped back and walked around.

He had to pass halfway across the street to skirt the overflow of men, and there in the open the constant shift of his eye was suddenly caught and held farther along the block.

Unbelieving, he stopped dead still, for a roan horse stood not fifty paces from him. There were other roans in town, sure; roans on any range were as common as loaded dice. But this one was unmistakable.

How long it had been standing there he couldn't say. Not for very long, and it had been ridden hard. It was wet. Its flanks still heaved from running. Then Gandy's measuring eye fixed upon the stirrup, and he saw beyond doubt that it was just long enough for the legs of a medium-sized girl.

His turn from the horse was abrupt, and he leaned against the backs of men, one shoulder edging in among them.

CHAPTER IV

GOSPEL HALL was a low, shallow room. Benches without backs crossed it, leaving a narrow aisle down the middle. At the far end a platform was raised about six inches. Two small windows gave dim light from the right side. The left side was solid against the adjoining building.

He stretched, turning his head, and saw Bill Hollister on the witness bench up front. Across less than 20 feet their eyes met. Faintly Walt grinned. Hollister's dark stare fixed upon him, held, swept on without the slightest recognition.

For a deeply puzzled moment Walt Gandy waited, and then he said, "Sweet Agnes!"

Walt looked up again toward Bill Hollister.

His lank border partner sat on the bench placed against the room's left partition, and with him were five other figures who seemed to be the main witnesses at this inquest. One was the girl.

By what headlong riding, and by what short cut she had reached here, he could only guess. Every range has its secret trails. While he had gone on to the C C ranch, following her direction and had talked to the deformed man there, she had beaten him into Emigrant by perhaps an hour. Why such riding? And what had she been doing there at the spring? Those questions would have to be answered. Even so early, hardly before arriving in this country, he had stumbled upon something. It came to Walt Gandy with a quickening beat of his blood that the easy living of his past two years was done.

As if drawn by the fixed intensity of his gaze the girl lifted her head. It was a slow wondering movement; she turned, and then her lips parted. She wet them with a quick dart of her tongue, the only visible sign of some sudden emotion, whether of surprise or dismay he could not tell.

The meeting of their eyes lasted no more than an instant, yet made a contact that to Walt Gandy was charged and electric. Next moment she turned her brown head away and did not look at him again.

The coroner had just called a new witness, and a young, smooth-faced cowboy was standing now at the front of the room. There was no witness box. A long table had been pushed out from the rear wall. Behind it sat a thin person with a sour face who plainly wished to give his verdict and be done. But on his left, a big man with heavy jaws tipped his chair back against the partition, scowled importantly and rumbled questions in a voice that came from his stomach. He wore the badge of sheriff. The cowboy looked scared. He was less than twenty, a likeable kid, ill at ease before the hard glare of the law.

The sheriff aimed a thick finger at him. "Now remember, Paul," he admonished, "where you are. Perjury means jail. You tell the truth, exactly what you see and when. The law ain't asking you to go against your boss, but the law wants facts. You understand?"

"Yes, sir." The boy's face reddened. Too many eyes were focused upon him.

"All right, then," the sheriff rumbled. "Daggett, go ahead."

The coroner laid down a cigarette. He put his questions as a matter of routine, his thin face impatient.

"Your name is Paul Champion?"

"Yes, sir," said the boy.

"You work for Cash Cameron?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long?"

"Four, no, five years, ever since my dad died, and Cash, Mr. Cameron took me—"

"Never mind," Coroner Daggett cut in. "You were the one who found the body?"

"Yes, sir."

"Tell exactly when."

"About . . ."

The sheriff interrupted. "Exactly!" he warned, gruff-voiced.

Coroner Daggett faced along the table to him. "See here, Battle," he complained a little angrily, "we've had all this. Let's finish."

The sheriff turned ponderously and stared at the thin man. For a moment the two county departments traded scowling looks. Then Sheriff Battle said, "The law ain't satisfied." He again confronted the boy. "Paul, you tell exactly what time you found Chino Drake!"

"My watch," said the cowboy flatly, "was busted."

Snorted laughter broke over the room. Boots scuffed and there came a babble of talk as tension was momentarily relieved.

The law banged his heavy fist on the table. Silence followed instantly.

The young cowboy was talking. "It was about three o'clock. In the morning I had turned water into the vegetable patch, and coming back to the ranch about three, I went in to shift the water onto a corn row. Maybe Chino Drake was going to cook us up some corn for our supper, because he was there in the row and an empty flour sack was near him. But I knew he was dead because his face was blue, and I saw the bullet hole."

"Where?" Sheriff Battle prodded, taking the inquest into his own hands. "Where was that bullet hole, and which way was Chino Drake lying?"

"The hole was in his forehead on the right side, and Chino was lying up the slope."

"Uh huh!" Battle emphasized. "So the bullet had come from those pine trees to the right of the garden patch."

"This was not a question, and as Battle pushed on, it seemed to Walt

Gandy, watching narrowly from his aisle seat, that the sheriff of Emigrant County was deliberately driving toward some predetermined point. Said Battle: "Now, Paul, where had you been, before three o'clock yesterday, and who had you seen?"

Until now, Cash Cameron had rested back against the wall, shadowed in the thick air and half hidden by the erect form of Bill Hollister. His arms were folded across a massive chest; his head was bent. He might have been dozing.

Abruptly he straightened, and all of this cattleman, who, single-handed, had made himself powerful enough to be bitterly hated on the Emigrant range, shifted into view. He was big-boned and angular. Age had stooped him a little. His hair was white, long and unkempt.

Cash Cameron was smiling, an oddly gentle tolerance in deep blue eyes that had looked upon this same grim struggle for seventy years; as if he had looked upon all this many times before, the deceit and meanness of men, understood it and blamed no one. But his face was strong, unyielding, with a stubborn mouth that moved sparingly under a white mustache.

He looked up at the cowboy. "It's all right, Paul," he said. "Tell them what you know." Then his blue gaze dropped across the table to Sheriff Battle. "Seems to me, Ed," he offered, "that you are almighty ribbed up over the killing of a ranch cook. You're sort of pushing this inquest, aren't you?"

Ed Battle bristled. "You're dang right I am!"

"Sure you know what you're driving at?" the ranchman asked in his low quiet voice.

"You think I don't know what I'm driving at, Cameron?" Battle countered. "Well, I do! And I'll state

it right here before this roomful, that if what I know ain't brought out now, I'll uncover proof of it myself within twenty-four hours!"

He turned toward his voters to let that take effect. "A ranch cook is a human, ain't he?" he asked the crowd. "And no human is going to be killed in this county, even on the C C, without somebody scorching. Furthermore," he accused, "someone in this inquest is lying like hell!"

Cameron was up onto his feet. "Look here—"

"I don't mean you, Cash," said the sheriff hastily. "You better sit down and wait till I get through with this boy."

Cameron crouched back onto his bench. Ed Battle hitched his chair forward. "We'll get along quicker if I question, and you answer yes or no, Paul. We've had Cameron's story; we'll see if yours checks. Yesterday noon you were riding Pine Knob and met Cameron there, huh?"

"Yes," the cowboy answered. "And Forest Ranger Sam Powell was with him, that right?"

"Yes."

Something like the tremor of an electric current ran through the packed room at Ed Battle's sudden flinging into the inquest the name of a United States forest ranger. Walt Gandy felt it, even before the low buzz of voices rose about him.

"There now!" said a stranger seated at his side.

Puzzled, Walt stared front, yet he was beginning to see deeper into the warfare that these men wanted to carry against Cash Cameron. Cheap grazing in the national forest was an important and touchy factor almost everywhere. Cameron must control a big slice here, being allotted forest grass in proportion to the number of cattle he owned. There was a rub. Walt Gandy drew a full breath, exhaled slowly, having for the moment a vision of how very far this thing might go—or had already gone.

The low buzz died and Ed Battle continued: "Cameron and Ranger Powell was arguing about grass privileges for C C cattle next summer, wasn't they?"

"I only heard them talking," said the boy.

"Cameron himself," Battle stated, "said there was an argument. Ain't that right, Cash?"

"I told you that," Cameron agreed. "If you wanted to know the whole of our talk, why didn't you bring Powell in here today?"

"Because Powell," said the sheriff pointedly, "wasn't to be got hold of. That's why." He continued with the boy. "You left them on Pine Knob and then what?"

"I rode south looking for steers that we're moving to winter in the sink. Then I swung back clean around the Knob and got home about three and found Chino Drake, like I said."

"And then?" Battle prompted, as Paul Champion bent his head and stared at the backs of his brown hands.

"I yelled and rode to the house," "Did you see anyone?"

"No one at all till I got around to where Mr. Cameron's office is and opened his door. He hadn't heard me because he was writing at his desk."

"Uh huh!" said Battle. "Writin'. Had he been doing anything else?"

For the second time, the cowboy turned an imploring gaze to his boss; and again Cash Cameron told him quietly: "Give them what you know, Paul. It's all right."

A fighting look crossed the young face. The boy pivoted to Sheriff Battle. "He had been cleaning a gun. I smelled oil, and a rifle was standing near the desk, and Mr. Cameron said to me, 'At last I got that calf-killing coyote, Paul.' Then I told him that Chino Drake was dead."

During a minute that seemed to Walt Gandy as long as an hour, the room hung in heavy silence. He could have heard his heart beat, but every sense was focused up front, where each figure on the platform was caught and fixed as motionless as stone—Sheriff Battle hunched forward on the edge of his chair, Coroner Daggett halfway along the table from him, scowling impatiently, young Paul Champion standing at the table end and behind him on the witness bench, Cash Cameron, his brown-haired girl, and Bill Hollister.

Ponderously Ed Battle rose. He pointed to the table top near the C C cowboy. "Is that the gun?"

A creaking of benches sounded in the room. With others around him, Walt stretched to look. An assortment of objects lay on the table, evidence in the killing. But largest among them was a rifle, lever-action, short-barreled, the kind that cowmen, the range over, carry in a scabbard slung beneath the stirrup of their saddles.

"Is it?" Battle repeated.

"Yes."

With startling suddenness Coroner Daggett leaped to his feet. He swung out a thin arm. "Battle, you're wasting the county's time! I won't listen to any more! You told me you had a case worked up, and you've got nothing. You have a rifle, but this bullet that came from the body didn't come from that gun! We tested it. This hearing can be reopened when you have facts. Now it's closed."

Ed Battle swayed. Helplessly he stood looking down, concentrating with a hard scowl as if in the process of his mind, two things that did not hook up should hook up anyway. There was the rifle that Cash Cameron had been cleaning; there was the rifle bullet that had killed a man. That bullet ought to have come from that gun!

Plainly it hadn't, for Coroner Daggett was closing his portfolio.

Battle swung his heavy head. "Hold on!" he thundered. "The law ain't satisfied here. You hold on a minute. I got one party I want to question again. Paul, you sit down. Miss Helen, I'd like for you to come back here on the stand."

The brown-haired girl shifted the hat from her lap to the floor, and then in rising, turned her face out over the crowd. Her head moved slowly; but her eyes darted. In a glance they found the aisle seat. Walt Gandy met them and at once, for that instant across the fifteen feet or less that separated him from this girl, he felt a pull toward her as strongly as if she had reached out her hand. Something of the telegraphic bond that years together had established between himself and Bill Hollister, seemed instantly alive behind the eyes of Helen Cameron. That darting look was an appeal.

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Gandy edged forward on his bench. Helen Cameron reached the platform. A cough shook her slim body, and she pressed a handkerchief to her lips, doubled a little, and supported herself against the table as if dizzy in the thick, stinging air.

Noticeably a change had come over the room. Hard-faced as these Emigrant ranchers were, and bitter against the power of Cash Cameron, they could not hold back the softening of their looks as they watched Cameron's daughter. She did not draw their pity, but she drew out of them the best of their respect. They admired her, she was one of their own; and beyond that she was an unforgettably attractive girl standing there quietly now, poised, waiting for the law to begin.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

NATIONAL AFFAIRS

Reviewed by CARTER FIELD

An Indian, in Washington, offers to bet that the Republicans will beat Roosevelt . . . Spread of war is seen in Allies' efforts to buy long-range bombers in the United States.

WASHINGTON.—An Indiana Republican, who has retired from politics and has been practicing law in Washington for some years, paid an extended visit to his native state. He has just returned, and his conversations are amazing some of his friends.

It so happens that among his friends is Sen. Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, and much of his conversation was directed at persuading the senator not to accept the vice presidential nomination on the Democratic ticket unless Wheeler could be sure that Franklin D. Roosevelt would head the ticket.

The Hoosier offered to bet anybody three to one that the Republicans will defeat any Democrat except Roosevelt in November. He goes further and offers to bet even money that they can beat Roosevelt.

It should be admitted at this point that the Indiana man in question is a very enthusiastic Republican. On the other hand, he is eminently practical, and his judgment is very cold. For example, personal egotism and blind partisan optimism were so lacking in him a few years ago that, when he saw the Democratic tidal wave coming, he did not run for re-election.

THE INDIANA INFLUENCE

But he still retains all his interest, and so on his visit back home he went up and down the state inquiring into trends.

His conviction as a result of this trip is that Indiana is going Republican this fall. His offers to bet about the presidential election are based, of course, largely on his findings in Indiana.

There is a conviction on the part of some people who do not live in Indiana, and were not born there, that Hoosiers are inclined to exaggerate the political importance of their state, especially the notion that "as goes Indiana so goes the nation."

But the word from Indiana, together with the bitter factional war of the Democrats in Illinois, and the Republican trends manifested in Ohio and Pennsylvania, indicate that this presidential battle will be a horse race.

EXPECT SPREAD OF WAR?

Here's one to try on your atlas—or globe—with a ruler or tape measure.

The allies right now are dickering for release of Uncle Sam's "flying fortress" bombers. They intimate they might buy 50 or 60 of them. The point is, of course, for what?

Up to now our experts had thought this particular type of plane would be useful only in the Western hemisphere. The so-called medium bombers are able to take off with a full load of bombs, fly from 700 to 800 miles to an objective, drop their bombs, and return with a fair margin of safety as to fuel supply.

The so-called "flying fortress" is able to extend this radius from 800 miles to more than 1,500. But—except for this tremendous increase in range they have no advantage whatever. For the shorter ranges the not so huge bombers are infinitely superior in speed. Two of them would carry just as much of an explosive load as the "flying fortress," and the two would not only cost much less than the one big fellow, but would be able, as a result of their greater speed, to have a much better chance both of achieving their objective and of returning safely.

BOMBERS COMPARED

The speed of the "medium" bomber is in excess of 350 miles an hour, while that of the "flying fortress" is only about 200 miles an hour. Obviously, in the element of a surprise attack, the faster bombers would be much more likely to get through to their objective before defense, either of anti-aircraft guns at the moment of attack, or of fighting planes to meet them en route, could be brought into successful action.

Then there is the question of getting home safely. Obviously again the "flying fortress" would have to have a considerable start en route home to be safe from pursuing fighting planes. Whereas the "medium" bomber would have to have very little start indeed to prevent its being overtaken by fighting planes.

Nor is there any possibility that any of these angles of superiority by the smaller bombers has been overlooked by the foreign experts. They know all about the subject. In fact, they come pretty close to knowing all the answers. Realizing this, our experts have been scratching their heads as to why the allies want the big ones

FARM TOPICS

FARM ACCIDENTS CAN BE STOPPED

Machinery Rated as Chief Hazard to Safety.

By J. B. RICHARDSON

Safety on the farm is largely home-made. One of the reasons there are so many accidents on the farm is that farm families operate largely on their own responsibility. For city people at work or at home, there are numerous safety precautions, and someone to enforce them.

Machinery should be listed as a top hazard in farm work, despite the many improvements made on machinery in recent years. The older hazards, such as unruly bulls and kicking horses, is next.

Surveys show, however, that most accidents are caused by carelessness such as haste, the use of makeshift repairs, by taking chances, by using machinery without guards, or with guards removed.

Among the reasons why the farm is a fertile field for accidents are these: Much farm work is done by individuals at some distance from others so that an accident may be serious because help is not at hand. On the farm there are frequent changes in work and machinery used, which may mean unfamiliarity with equipment and less accuracy of movement. Under the pressure of summer work, there are often long hours in the field, and chores done in a hurry after dark—both conducive to accidents.

The suffering, the loss of time, and the actual cash cost of these accidents shows the need for avoiding them. It has been shown time and time again that the well-ordered farm, with well-ordered activities, is good insurance against accidents.

But still, to a great extent the farmer must be his own safety engineer and almost entirely his own disciplinarian.

Insect Traps on Plane Detect Spread of Pests

By trapping insects high in the air entomologists are able to gather valuable new information on the habits, and particularly on the spread, of some of the destructive pests of farm crops. Inspection of the mixed catch of insects taken at a certain altitude is useful, for example, in indicating whether a certain type of insect makes most of its advance by flight under its own power or goes a long distance at a time by soaring high and letting the prevailing wind carry it.

P. A. Glick of the United States department of agriculture in systematic airplane flights over Louisiana and Old Mexico, and covering all seasons of several years, collected many of the important and destructive crop pests. He reports captures of boll weevils at 2,000 feet, spotted cucumber beetles at 3,000 feet, and leaf-hoppers at altitudes up to 13,000 feet. Mosquitoes, common in lower layers, also were found as high as 5,000 feet. The pink bollworm moth collected, sometimes more than half a mile above the surface, showed that it can spread to our country by natural means. Some small wingless insects were frequent at very high altitudes; for example, springtails and silver fish at from 8,000 to 11,000 feet.

The insects were collected in traps specially designed for use on airplanes and controlled from the cockpit or cabin. In practice it was the rule to keep a trap section open for a certain number of minutes with the plane flying level at that altitude, then close the section and mount 500 or 1,000 feet and bag another sample while holding that altitude.

Agricultural News

During the past 35 years, "cow testing associations" have advanced from agencies for testing the butter fat of milk to full-fledged dairy herd improvement associations, keeping track of milk weights, feed records, and breeding for members, and providing a system of proving sires automatically through the United States bureau of dairy industry.

Top dressing grain fields with manure is a great help in securing seedlings. Rates of application may vary from five to eight tons per acre. Poor land should get first treatment, and straw spread thinly can be used when manure is not available.

Removing cream from milk takes out most of the vitamin A content. If cream is removed from milk fortified with vitamin D, both A and D are taken out. In homogenized milk the fat particles and vitamin A are distributed throughout the fluid.

About 700,000,000 acres in the United States do not receive enough rainfall for profitable agriculture, it is said. About 12,000,000 people live in this area. Of this area, 20,000,000 acres are irrigated.

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