

CATTLE KINGDOM

By ALAN LEMAY

© Alan Le May
WNU Service

CHAPTER I

"Of course you knew," the girl said, "a man has been killed, here on the 94 range?"

Billy Wheeler turned to look at the girl who perched beside him on the corral fence, and for a moment he forgot to answer. Marian Dunn hadn't been in the desert country long enough to gather a very heavy tan. Under the shadow of her Stetson her face reflected the glow of the fresh morning sunlight upon the red hills; to Billy Wheeler it seemed a fragile face, finely drawn, suggesting transparency. And her eyes were blue distance boiled down. She wore belted overalls and half boots; but she could never have been mistaken for a Westerner.

Billy Wheeler, though, could never be mistaken for anything else. The dry intermountain country, by its necessity of wide ranges and the perpetual mobility of the saddle, has set its mark upon its sons. Wheeler was young, but his weather-trimmed features showed the blast of sun and sweep of wind, and his gray eyes were vividly tuned to distance.

The girl turned her eyes to him, reminding him he was supposed to say something.

"I didn't hear much," he said. "A gas station man told me there was a killing, as I came through Inspiration; but he didn't know much about it."

"I guess nobody does."

"Yes, but—who was killed? And when?"

"That's just it," the girl told him. "They don't know who was killed. It's the strangest thing I ever heard of. They can't even find him."

"Can't find who? The man who was killed?"

"That's it."

Billy Wheeler grinned slowly, boyishly. "Well, I'll be darned!"

"I don't think it's funny. I think it's horrible."

"Well, yes; I guess it is."

He looked away, estimating again the nearness of the approaching riders. John "Red Horse" Dunn, Old Man of the 94, at whose summons Wheeler had come 300 miles, had not been on hand to receive him, having set out before daylight on an unknown mission with three of his cow hands. But they were coming in now; across the dry morning Wheeler could identify the individual riders at the half mile as they jog-trotted in, their ponies abreast.

"When did all this happen?" he asked.

"Uncle John found the sign, as he calls it, yesterday morning."

"Then he must have wired me right after that."

"I guess so."

She hadn't known, then, that her uncle had sent for him. She hadn't known that he was coming—and he hadn't known she was here. That made a difference.

"Uncle John hasn't wanted to talk about this thing—to me," the girl now said. "Perhaps he'll give you a different, clearer story, Billy."

They fell silent. Billy Wheeler let his eyes run over casual, familiar things—the roadster he had come in, the tall barns, the low-sprawled house, bunkhouse, and grub shack. But as Billy Wheeler's eyes drifted out over the vast rolling "flats" of the plain, resting here and there on a broken, flat-topped mesa or far up-thrust mountain of gaunt red rock, all that he saw, excepting only the far peaks, was under the dictatorship of Horse Dunn's brand—the 94.

Billy Wheeler looked at these familiar things, but he was not thinking about them. He was thinking about the girl at his side, whom he hardly looked at at all.

Billy Wheeler had not seen Marian Dunn for two years. Had he known that she was here, he would not have come here now.

Marian Dunn was Horse Dunn's niece. Once, for a couple of months two years ago, Wheeler had seen her every day. He had used every persuasion he knew of, all he had, to make this girl love him—and had failed. Sometimes he could still hear her low, cool voice: "I'm sorry—truly sorry." The sincere regret in that was pretty hard to take.

In everything else he had succeeded. He had come up from nothing in cows, and tripled in land, and switched back to cows to double again. He had liquidated everything at the peak of cattle prices, and at twenty-seven had nothing to worry about. But in this one thing he cared most about he had met only complete blank defeat. He would not have come here, to raise again the bitterness of that defeat, if he had known that she was here.

And now there was a certain awkwardness between them, since she inevitably knew all that, too.

"I think he's going to ask a favor of you," Marian said.

"I don't know if you know this," Billy Wheeler said slowly; "but his wire made out as if he was offering me a job."

"Yes—I knew that."

"I owe a lot to old Horse Dunn," Billy Wheeler said. "He picked me up when I was fourteen years old, half-way starved and all the way

maverick. He carried me along four years. If it wasn't for him, I'd be in the wild bunch—or in the pen. And he showed me my start in cattle."

"I suppose then," Marian said, "you won't turn him down in this thing now?"

"I've got things to see to, Marian," he stalled. "I couldn't take on another job now."

He supposed she might know that this was not so. For the present he was out from under; he could afford to do anything he wanted to, to fill his time or to help a friend. But to take a job in which he would see this girl every day, while yet tight-cinched by the knowledge that she was not for him, and never would be—that was something else.

"I don't know how much he needs you," Marian said; "nor who else he could get, instead. But I know this—he has more enemies than friends, by three to one."

Billy Wheeler stirred restlessly, and began to build a cigarette. He knew it was true that the 94 had many enemies, few friends. Here in

"I shouldn't like to think," the girl said oddly, as if with difficulty, "that you turned him down because I'm here."

For an instant he sat perfectly still, silent. He hadn't expected her to come out with it, direct and straight like that.

She put both hands on the rail between them and leaned toward him. "I'd never forgive myself if I thought you let Horse Dunn down on account of me. I'll—get out of here, if you want me to."

He looked straight at her—and lied. "Nothing farther from my mind," he assured her. "No call to even think of such a thing."

He paused, listening to the stamper of hoofs beyond a big barn which obscured the riders as they swung into the layout.

And now rescue came, as Horse Dunn thundered around the corner of the barn and slid his pony to a stop before them in a great up-jump of dust.

To old-timers John Dunn was known as "Red Horse Jack"—or more commonly, just "Horse" Dunn—partly because he was big as a horse, and partly because of the coarse sorrel mane he had had in his youth. Nobody knew how old Horse Dunn was; they thought he must be sixty-eight at least, and his mustache and curly beard were at last roaned with gray. But he seemed to have an Indian medicine on him which cheated time, for he was powerful and barrel-chested yet, and straight as a lodgepole pine.

Half an hour after his return Dunn was to be seen leaping against a post of the open gallery which ran along the front of the cook-shack; he was chewing a blade of burro grass. Said he, "We all grant a man is dead. Any of you still doubting that?" He watched the cowboys, who lounged along the open edge of the gallery floor, but none of them answered.

Breakfast had been set out by a little withered old woman known as Tia Cara. She had fed them promptly—and they ate the same way.

"Look here," Dunn went on. "Look here! I'm going to ask you once more—and this is the last time. If any of you is a good enough man to have blasted a cow thief, say so now! I'll back any boy of mine that shot in defense of the brand. You know that!"

He paused, and waited. Val Douglas, Dunn's thirty-year-old range boss, let mid eyes dream on a distant peak, and Tulare Callahan spat over his shoulder through his teeth.

"I'll—Get Out of Here If You Want Me To."

this dusty, mesa-broken land Horse Dunn had set out to build a cow kingdom—a kingdom on the grand scale of the old days.

But you can't build a cow kingdom, buying up the range rights of little brand after little brand, without annoying and disturbing the brands that are left; and the bought-out brands are forever trying to edge back.

Here and there in the world were perhaps half a dozen graves commemorating the drawn-out, inevitable conflict. There had never been a general open war. But more than one lone-riding cowboy of the 94 had come to his end by the gunfire of persons unknown, and one or two others had left on the range an enemy who would force the issue no more. And at Ace Springs had died two men of four—hired gun-fighters all—who had jumped Horse Dunn from ambush. The 94 could have started its own Boot Hill.

More effectual than those brief, unofficial bursts of action was the enmity of certain cooler, more wisely watchful men, like Link Bender, Pinto Halliday, Sam Caldwell—the defeated contestants for the Red Hills ranges. Nowadays the expanding 94 found itself encircled by a veritable wolf ring of enemies—a wolf ring biding its time with a malevolent optimism.

"I don't even know what the situation is," the girl went on. "But it's worrying him deeply; he can't hide that, not from me. And his first move was to turn to you."

"Oh, shucks now, Marian . . ."

simple, but very logical. If he gives his affection, it is given wholeheartedly. He dislikes trouble, and will avoid it as long as possible. Yet his defense mechanism is quickly stirred by malignant forces. The curious part of dog and human relationships is that the human being invariably learns something from his dog—the degree of knowledge varying according to the intelligence of the person.

Motorists of the petulant species are not the only ones who benefit from the dog. The diabetic, who also is really of an explosive, worrisome disposition has a greater expectation of life if he becomes interested in a dog. Doctors have recommended dogs as pets especially for children suffering from diabetes.

French Prefer St. Martin Saint Martin is the most popular of all French saints, if popularity may be measured by the number of cities, villages and churches named after him. 3,672 churches alone bear his name, dotting the entire country.

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FIRST INSTALLMENT RUNS IN THIS ISSUE!

Cattle Kingdom

Mystery and adventure on the open range . . . three strange murders that echo through the hills! Follow this intriguing drama of the West in Alan Le May's newest serial story . . . "Cattle Kingdom." You'll be amazed at the throbbing action, the swift turn of events—and the shattering climax. You'll be delighted by an unusual romance in which the hero is forced to prove his worth by sheer courage.

Here is a serial you must read . . . a story that will live in your memory for years to come. "Cattle Kingdom" is different—it's more than just another Western story. All the thrills of a murder mystery, all the red-blooded action of an outdoor yarn . . . these things have been combined into one superb tale that critics everywhere have praised. The first installment appears today . . . others, just as thrilling, are coming.

READ IT REGULARLY IN THESE COLUMNS

Sheer Wools in Summer Wardrobe

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



Fancy shadow weaves, fascinating bright prints and embroidery motifs are cleverly emphasized by simple styling. Sheer monotones and self-plaided weaves vie with hard-twisted worsteds for first place in the tailored scene.

The adaptability of sheer wool knits is well illustrated in the slim short-sleeved frock shown to the left in the picture. The material for this dress is a featherweight angora knit in pearl gray with distinctive two-toned bands in brown and maize inserted in bolero effect in the blouse and edging the sleeves and skirt hem. The smart shirt-waist closing below a rounded collarless neck is finished with a row of composition buttons in maize. A deep inverted pleat in the skirt front gives plenty of action freedom.

As pictured to the right, close knit wool jersey in chic navy blue makes a stunning and versatile frock for sports or spectator wear. Cut on flattering princess lines with a full-length front buttoned closing, it is cool and practical. Sleeves are full and short and neckline is high. Men's tie silk in gay red, navy and white tri-color patterning is interesting trimming. Note how attractively it is employed to outline two large plastron pockets and the round yoke treatment below a trim tailored neck.

A stunning color combination distinguishes the beautifully tailored dress and redingote ensemble of sheer wool centered in the group. Tucked treatment in bold chevron patterning accents the high-throated neckline. The dusty rose dress is topped by a full length redingote in a light olive green. Double flap hip pockets and scissor-sharp lapels are nice details.

Wool knits, light as a feather and luxuriously soft to the touch, make charming and supremely correct sports frocks. Whether you are an agile golfer or simply a deck loungeur your wool knit costume will give you a joyful feeling of freedom to take your fun as you find it. Both pastel and darker shades are too smart for sports and clever designs vary from one-piece classic styles to two-piece and jacket costumes that may be ensembled with a variety of blouses and accessories. Zephyr knits, soft wool jerseys and fine featherweight angoras are cool and comfortable, and lacy weaves in lightweight wool are unusually interesting.

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What Irvin S. Cobb Thinks about

Semi-Nude Fashions. SANTA MONICA, CALIF. —Clothes may not make the man, but leaving them off certainly makes him foolish. And that goes double for the women.

Whence arises the present-day delusion that going about dressed at half-mast enhances the attractiveness of the average adult? Our forbears of the Victorian era wore too much for health or happiness or cleanliness. But isn't it worse to offend the eye all through the lingering summer by not wearing enough to cover up blemishes, the bulges of the buttocks and the bloats that come with maturity? Sun baths should be taken on a doctor's prescription, not at the corner of First and Main.

Women old enough to know better are the worst offenders, seems like. If only they'd stop to consider that the snail, which is naked, would lose in any beauty contest against the butterfly, which wears all the regalia the traffic will stand!

But even though it's for their own good, you can't tell 'em. If somebody started the fad of going at the game while practically nude, inside of two weeks mumblepeep would be the national pastime—until somebody else thought up a game to be played by folks without a stitch on. Or anyhow, just a stitch here and there.

Doctors Movie Scripts. USUALLY they lay these yarns on Mr. Sam Goldwyn, who thrives upon them and goes right on turning out successes, his motto being, "What's grammar as between friends so long as the box office shows results?" But, for a change, this one is ascribed to another producer, who proudly describes himself as a self-made man, who, according to his critics, is relieving the Creator of a considerable responsibility and putting the blame where the blame belongs. They also say no self-made man should stop with the job only partly finished. But then Hollywood is full of parties trying to push Humpty Dumpty off the wall.

As the tale runs, this gentleman entered the conference chamber at his studio and as, with a kingly gesture, he laid down a fat sheaf of typewritten pages, said to the assembled intellects of his staff:

"Jumppmen, in all my experience in the picture business this is what you might call unique. Here is absolutely, possibly the only perfect script I have ever read in my entire life. I tell you that before we start altering it."

Strikes Versus Wars. DID you ever notice how like a war is a strike?

The operator and his operatives are the shock troops that suffer the heaviest casualties. The owner risks his profits and perhaps his market and sometimes his plant. The worker gives up his wages, frequently his job, occasionally his life.

Stockholders see dividends vanishing and investments shrinking. Citizens see their communities disrupted. Women and children go on short rations, many a time go actually hungry. For, as in a war, the innocent non-combatants bear most grievous burdens.

Those who really garner in the spoils—professional agitators; financial buzzards eager to seize on bankrupted industries; lawyers with their writs and their injunctions; imported thugs masquerading, for one side or the other as honest mechanics—these might be likened to stay-at-home diplomats and profiteers and hired mercenaries who induce friendly nations to turn enemies so they may gain their own selfish ends.

After it's over, we realize that almost any strike might have been averted had common sense and common justice ruled, rather than greed and entrenched stubbornness and fomented hate. And the same is true of almost any war. For every real benefit to humanity came out of peace and arbitration, not out of battle and destruction.

And here's the final parallel: Ultimately, the supposed victor finds himself the actual loser. Tell me which army won any great strike—or any great war—and I'll tell you who won the San Francisco fire and the Galveston flood.

IRVIN S. COBB.
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Crocodiles, Alligators so closely allied zoologically to many laymen cannot distinguish between them. Hence alligators are frequently accused of attacking and killing men when, in reality, the killers are crocodiles. Naturalists who have spent their