

Cattle Kingdom

By **ALAN LEMAY**
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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 short 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. Dunn reveals that because of a financial crisis the ranch might 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 trader, 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 wounds. 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. 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 up. They have an argument, and by a trick Bender tries to shoot him. Billy saves himself by plunging against Bender's pony and "the Kid" is injured. Coffee returns to the ranch with the saddle and reveals that Cayuse Cayetano is on the trail for Sheriff Amos. The saddle belonged to Lon Magoon, a small-time cattle thief. Link learns he is to be arrested for assaulting "Kid" Bender. On the sheriff's orders, Billy and the ranchmen drive into Inspiration. On the way, Coffee tells him that the murder victim was not shot by the man riding with him. Billy is disturbed when Marian seems to be interested in Val Douglas. At a hearing before Justice Shafer, the sheriff, aided by Dunn's enemies, tries to incriminate Billy for attacking "Kid" Bender.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

They were at the point of the whole thing, now. If the 94 had a chance, it depended on the activity of Wheeler, who, with his credit and his cow finance connections, might gain time for Horse Dunn. Not the danger of ultimate conviction, but delay on a trumped-up charge was what Wheeler feared.

Horse Dunn snarled in his throat, and there was an instant's silence. Nothing could have shown the force of the man, and the resentful power he held, better than that. "Order!" said Judge Shafer, looking startled. "Order in the court!" His command sounded fantastic in that quiet room, for Dunn said nothing.

"This," Amos went on, "is a wealthy man, as folks around here go. And he's lined up with a wealthy outfit. But it's people like him that raise the hell around here, always water-hogging, always roughing the range. We can't hardly get through a season any more without some poor feller gets dry-gulched. One's been killed only just this week. Now if this guy can pull a gun on an officer, and put him out of business, and then walk out of here, free and easy—then we aren't going to have any law at all, and I can't answer for it. That's all I got to say."

"You want to say anything, Wheeler?" Shafer asked.

"Judge, if it's got so a man can't even put up bail while he waits for a trial in district court, then there's no justice left."

"I'll decide that," Shafer said tartly. "If it's come to a pass where—"

"Now you look here," Horse Dunn boomed.

"Quiet here!" Shafer snapped. "I can't see but what the sheriff's position is reasonable, and more than reasonable. The statement sworn to by Kid Bender and the statement by the defendant is two different things; but there's a witness backing up Kid Bender. There's been altogether too much gun-toting and general ructions on this range. I—"

"Just a minute," Marian Dunn said.

Judge Shafer halted in full career; and abruptly a new motionless silence came over the people packed into that room, at the sound of the girl's voice. "Huh?" said Shafer.

"I'll testify."

For a moment Shafer seemed not to comprehend, and there was a moment more of that dense heavy quiet.

Sheriff Walt Amos spoke, his voice flat, ironic, and his contempt for the judge was in it—the contempt of a quick-thinking man for a slow one. "She can't testify."

"Why can't she?"

"Because she hasn't been called by either side."

"I want you people to know," said Judge Shafer, "that I'm running this court!"

In the heavy quiet while Shafer still hesitated, Wheeler watched the faces of Horse Dunn's enemies. The young cowboys were unwillingly friendly to the girl, swayed by an inevitable attraction. But in the

faces of the cow bosses Wheeler saw a strange thing. These older, embittered men were seeing Marian not as a girl but as a part of the 94. He noticed the dark, hard gaze of Link Bender, and the unforgettable green eyes of Rufe Deane, the man who blamed Dunn for the death of his son.

"This court means to serve out right and justice, not technicalities," Shafer decided. "And if Miss Dunn wants to testify, I'll call her as a witness for the court."

There was a moment's pause. "I was at Short Creek," Marian said. "Go ahead, Miss Dunn—just tell the court what you saw, in your own words."

Marian Dunn still sat with her cheek rested upon her hand; her eyes flicked to Horse Dunn, then to Billy Wheeler, but conveyed nothing. "I was only a little distance away—I saw all of it. Kid Bender rode up out of the bed of the creek, sliding his horse so hard he had to slide to keep from knocking Wheeler's horse over. They sat there talking; Kid Bender seemed to be threatening Wheeler. Finally—"

"Now why do you say 'seemed'?" Walt Amos broke in. "Either you heard what was said or you didn't."

"Let her tell her story!"

"Finally," Marian continued, "Kid Bender motioned with his head toward where I was sitting and Billy Wheeler turned, as if to see where



"You Want Me to Finish With Cross-Questioning This Witness?"

I was. While Billy Wheeler was turned away Kid Bender jerked out his gun. It was the most unfair, unwarranted thing you could possibly imagine."

"You mean to say—"

"Be still!" said Shafer.

"Wheeler saw the gun just in time. He half dropped out of the saddle—evidently trying to avoid the shot; he seemed to try to get the neck of Bender's horse between himself and the gun. Just then Bender's gun went off. Both horses jumped; but Bender's reared, and fell over backwards."

"Well, when did Wheeler fire?"

"He didn't fire at all."

"But what about this gunsmoke?"

"I didn't see any smoke. There was a lot of dust going up from the ground, but that was all."

"This is remarkable," said Shafer.

"It's an almighty funny thing," Amos said, "that this wasn't put in by the defendant in the first place!"

"You want to cross-examine, Amos?"

"I certainly do," said the sheriff. "Look here, Miss Dunn! How long have you known this man Wheeler?"

"What's the point to that?" Wheeler demanded.

"Judge," said Amos, "I claim this woman is—"

"Watch yourself!" said Billy Wheeler.

There was a general stir through all that dense press of men. "Come to order!" said Shafer. "I—"

"I don't mean," Billy Wheeler began, "to let this—"

"Will you come to order," said Shafer, "or take a contempt of court?"

Outside there now rose a disturbance as a dust-cruised car came careening down the street; it half spun as it skidded to a stop in the middle of the roadway in front of Shafer's office. Sam Caldwell, square-set, heavy-necked ally of Link Bender, forged his way through the crowd and came shouting up the steps. Inside and outside the quiet broke into mumbling disorder.

"You want me to finish with cross-questioning this witness," the sheriff was demanding of the judge, "or not? If you want me to clear this court—"

"I've never had to clear a court

yet," said Shafer. "I—what's going on here?"

He sat back and stared scowling at the disturbance which set the whole room in motion as Sam Caldwell thrust his way through the door and up to the table. Reaching it, Caldwell jerked off his big hat, and threw it on the table like an old-time fighter throwing his hat into the ring. His face was steaming red, marked with dust-muddied sweat.

Caldwell looked at Judge Shafer heavily, with the dislike that hard-riding cattlemen have for men whom they consider ineffectual. "There's a man been killed—another, by God!" he said. "Cut in two with a shotgun at Ace Springs."

Walt Amos said sharply, "Sam, who's killed?"

"Cayuse Cayetano! Dead since yesterday."

CHAPTER VII

As word of Cayuse Cayetano's murder swept through the street, the loosely grouped crowd shifted and seemed to seethe, gathering in knots. The half-breed tracker had been loved by none, respected by none; but his trail genius was undisputed, and it had been widely rumored that he was very close to important revelations. Half a dozen men tried to follow Sam Caldwell into the already-crowded county office, forcing in through a considerable number of the crowd inside who had immediately started to make their way out.

Though it was Judge Shafer's boast that he had never had to clear a court in his life, he was induced to do so now.

"If you've got your court clear, let's have order," said Judge Shafer. "I mean to get this over with. Wheeler, is your defense finished?"

"You yourself called the only eye witness here, and the only witness worth a whoop," Wheeler said. "That ought to be defense enough for any man."

"You got anything more to say, sheriff?"

"Get it over with," snapped the sheriff. "If you're going to let in testimony like that last, I can't stop you. And I've got other work to do."

"This is as unsatisfactory a case as I've ever seen on this bench," Judge Shafer said. "Something's wrong—something's very wrong. I'd like to reserve decision and think it over."

"Reserve, hell! Let's have it, one way or the other," Amos demanded. "All right! All right! Have it your own way! Case dismissed!"

Sheriff Walt Amos angrily crashed his open hand upon the table top and stood up. "There's a sweet decision!"

"Any other court would give you a contempt for that," said Shafer wispishly. "The court stands adjourned!"

He crammed his papers into his brief case and stalked out, looking angry, insulted, and anxious to get away from there. Nobody spoke to him or interfered with him as he went down the steps and out of sight in the street, moving at a hurried amble.

Sam Caldwell hesitated a moment, bringing with him Pinto Halliday and Link Bender, their deputies' badges half hidden, but evident.

"You want me?" said Link Bender.

"Stick around here. Where's Rufe Deane?"

"He'll be here in a minute."

"There's other work to do," said Link Bender. "That can't be done here. I better be getting at it!"

"Stay here," said Walt Amos shortly.

Link Bender stared at him a moment, then leaned against the wall, his dark hawk face hard and tight-lipped.

"If you're through with us we'll be leaving," said Horse Dunn.

"I'm not through with you. I'll tell you when I'm through."

"You'll have to let my wagon boss go, so's he can drive my wagon back to the ranch," Horse Dunn told him.

The sheriff looked at Dunn for a moment, without seeming to see him; he appeared to be listening, or weighing other things. "All right. On condition that he immediately get out of town. An hour from now I don't want to find he's still here."

"I'll be out of here, all right," Val Douglas said.

"Well, I'll see you start. You ready, Miss Dunn?"

"Better take my roadster. He gave her the key, and she accepted it without meeting his eyes."

After Marian and Val left Sheriff Walt Amos spoke.

"Dunn," he said at once, "where was Val Douglas yesterday?"

"He was in Nine-Mile Valley," Dunn said.

"And that's not so far from Ace Springs, is it?"

"Not so far."

"But riding toward Santiam he'd be going just the opposite way from Ace Springs, wouldn't he?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

"Toward Santiam," said the sheriff, "was where he said he was, when I asked him a while ago. What's your answer to that?"

The two men eyed each other. "If he said he was up toward Santiam, he was probably up toward Santiam," Dunn said.

The sheriff grunted and half grinned, without humor. "How lucky. With a man dead at Ace Springs, naturally Douglas was as far away as he could get! Where were you, Wheeler?"

One by one they each gave their answers, tersely, without conciliation, as the same question was put to each.

"I want you boys," the sheriff said to his deputies, "to remember what these boys have said."

"You figure to keep us here all night?" Horse Dunn demanded.

"I'm going to turn you out of here in ten minutes," Amos said.

Rufe Deane, swinging up the wooden steps, was in time to catch the sheriff's answer. He now thrust in, his green eyes ugly under his shaggy sorrel brows. "You're going to what?" he said.

"I have no intention," the sheriff said, "of holding these men on what we got against 'em so far."

Rufe Deane angered with an obvious, unexpected violence.

"These men'll never leave this town," he said.

"I decide that here," said the sheriff.

Rufe Deane stared at him a moment longer, green fury in his eyes. Suddenly he tore off his deputy's badge and threw it on the floor.

"Maybe you do," he said. He turned and went out into the street, the high heels of his boots clumping slowly, restrained; but as he disappeared from view they heard his step, quicken on the board walk.

Walt Amos said, "You want that badge, Sam?"

Sam Caldwell hesitated a moment. "All right," he said.

The sheriff turned on his remaining deputies. "If either of you want to string with Rufe Deane, now's the time to say so! Because the next job of this office is to guarantee these men safe conduct out of town."

"Wait," said Link Bender. "I'm for you and I always have been; and there's mighty few jobs I'd back off from as a peace officer. But I don't know as I can bring myself to turn my hand to that!"

Horse Dunn spoke up, his voice rumbling in his chest. "Who the hell wants safe conduct?" he said contemptuously. "When you're tired of jawing, we'll move on out."

Sanitation Will Prevent or Check Turkey Disease

Sanitary measures will prevent or check the development of the blackhead disease of turkeys which is killing many poults, according to Dr. E. N. Stout, extension veterinarian for Colorado State college at Fort Collins.

Some turkey growers are being victimized by irresponsible people who are selling vaccines and medicines as cures for blackhead, Dr. Stout is informed.

No drug or vaccine has been developed that has any value in curing or preventing this disease, he declares. There are, however, he adds, certain sanitary measures which are valuable in preventing or checking this disease.

Turkeys should not be raised with chickens because chickens often are infested with worms which may carry microscopic parasites that cause blackhead after turkeys eat contaminated food or drink polluted water.

It is dangerous to allow turkeys to drink ditch water because of the danger of blackhead infection from chickens on other farms through which the ditch water flows.

"Climacteric" of an Apple

Did you ever hear of the "climacteric" of an apple? It is a new English term, likely to be used in this country, says the Rural New-Yorker. It denotes the stage of development of fruit in which all source of food supply from the parent tree is cut off and it no longer has the capacity to build up and repair itself. In this stage the fruit takes up oxygen. Gives off carbon dioxide, gives off heat, loses cell turgor, and fails to maintain the wear and tear on itself. Speaking loosely this might be called the ripening stage. Most fruit is harvested just before the onset of climacteric.

Age Limit on Pullets

There is a good deal of latitude in the classification of fowls according to size, weight and age, there being no exact limits which may be called into use to designate the birds at their different stages of growth, according to a writer in the Rural New-Yorker. In ordinary usage, a pullet is a female fowl under one year of age, after which age the pullet becomes a hen. As a marketing term for young birds, however, a pullet is an immature female from 8 to 20 weeks of age from three-fourths pound to 3½ pounds in weight.

Pre-Salted Celery

Pre-salted celery may become a new market feature if tests to be made in Dare county, N. C., this season bear out present indications. County Agent C. W. Overman found celery making excellent growth in waste places near Manteo although the plants were at times covered by tide waters. Those who tasted the celery said the tide water gave the celery just enough salt to make it highly palatable. At any rate, a number of growers are trying plants.

Avian Paralysis in Poultry

In studies at Massachusetts State college avian paralysis is believed to be due to cell or filterable virus which affects the nervous system. It has been transmitted through the egg, though the manner of transmission is not fully understood. Birds with resistance and with susceptibility to the disease have been found. The question remains open and much additional study is necessary to clear up many of the important points.

Great Pyramid of Gizeh

The length of each side of the Great Pyramid at Gizeh is 746 feet. Before the outer covering of limestone was removed, the length was 755½ feet. The perpendicular height is 450 feet; originally it was about 481 feet. The sides rise at an angle of 51 degrees 50 minutes. The area covered is about 13 acres.

Here's What to Sew



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"Mermaids" Vanishing

The "mermaids" will soon be extinct. These curious sea creatures, resembling human beings and which were mistaken for them by old-time sailors, are dugongs, a species of sea-cow, which were exceedingly common in the Indian and South Atlantic oceans years ago. Now, due to the constant commercial hunting for their meat and oil and the sharks ravaging their young, they are among the rarest of all living creatures.

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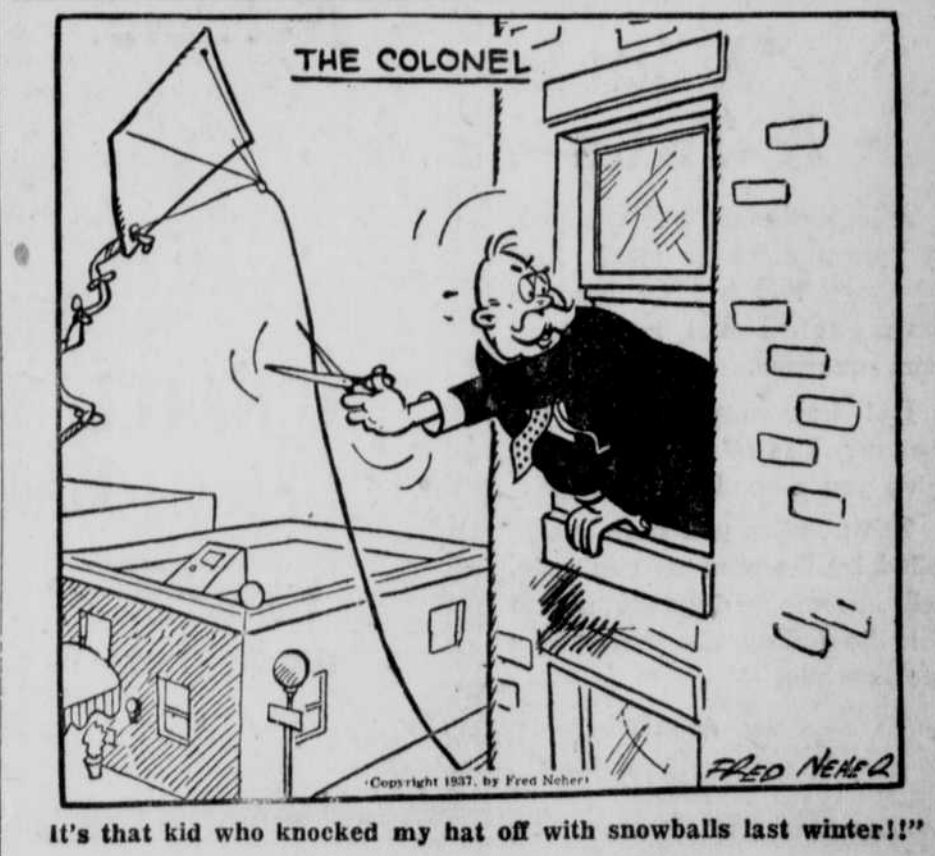
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LIFE'S LIKE THAT By Fred Neher



It's that kid who knocked my hat off with snowballs last winter!!