

THE SMOKY YEARS

By ALAN LE MAY

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INSTALLMENT 16
THE STORY SO FAR:

Dusty King and Lew Gordon had built up a vast string of ranches. King was killed by his powerful and unscrupulous competitor, Ben Thorpe. Bill Roper, King's adopted son, was determined to avenge his death in spite of the opposi-

CHAPTER XXII

"We're making a big mistake, not to hang him and be done with it," Red Kane said.

They were two days from Fork Creek now. This long and narrow room, which Jim Leathers paced so restlessly, was the kitchen of the main house at Walk Lasham's southwest camp—a convenient stop-over on the way to Sundance, where Roper was to be turned over to Ben Thorpe.

"The quicker we hang him, the better we'll be off," Red Kane said again.

Wearily, doggedly, Jim Leathers rolled a cigarette. He took his time about replying. "Seems like you already said that once before."

"I'm liable to keep on saying it," Red Kane told him. "Things is different now."

In the doorway, behind the two men who watched Bill Roper, a girl now appeared, a slim, full-breasted girl, whose dark, slanting eyes had sometimes troubled Bill Roper before now.

He had not been surprised to find Marquita here in Walk Lasham's southwest cow camp, to which his captors had brought him. He had guessed, when he had last talked to her in Miles City, that she was Walk Lasham's girl; and in spite of her expressed eagerness to leave Lasham and ride with Roper, he realized that Marquita still had to live in some way.

Girls of her stamp could not afford to throw down such a man as Lasham, until more interesting opportunities offered.

Her face was impassive now, but one of the slanting dark eyes narrowed in a definite signal to Roper. The combination of Spanish and Indian blood in this girl from the Tex border gave her a lithe, lazy grace, and a haunting depth of dark eyes; and the same blood made her unaccountable—sometimes stoic and smouldering, sometimes livened by the lightning flashes of an inner fire.

Undoubtedly she was capable of a passionate devotion, and an equally passionate cruelty. Anything could happen in a situation which included Marquita—with Marquita in love.

For a moment Bill Roper resented the fact that he couldn't be interested in any girl except Jody Gordon—a girl who didn't want him or need him. All the worst aspects of his own situation were apparent to him, then. He was an outlaw wanted the length of the Trail; probably would be an outlaw all the rest of his life, which gave every promise of being a short one. That even Marquita wanted him, or had any use for him, was a gift which he should have been glad to accept. What he had to think of now, though, was that Marquita was extremely likely to precipitate a lot of immediate disturbance.

Troubled, he wished to shake his head, or in some other way caution her that she must make no attempt to interfere. Roper had no intention of ever coming into the hands of Ben Thorpe alive. Somewhere between this place and Sundance, where Thorpe waited, he would make his play, however slim the chance.

Yet he would rather take his chances with some unforeseen opportunity later, when they were again on the trail, than to be plunged into some helpfully intended situation which the girl might devise—with danger to herself and questionable advantage to him. She had never brought him any luck.

He was unable, however, with the eyes of his two enemies upon him, to signal her in any way.

"Ben wanted him alive, if I could get him," Jim Leathers said stubbornly. "Well, I got him alive, and I aim to keep him that way. You bums ain't going to talk me into anything different just because you figure a dead man is easier to pack."

Bill Roper listened sardonically. In the two days spent in traveling from Fork Creek rendezvous, the scalp wound which had brought him down had nearly healed; but when he laced his fingers behind his head he winced and dropped his hands again.

It was typical of the quality of his captors that his hands were not tied or manacled. They told him where to sit and they made him stay put, and they were careful that no opportunity was given him to snatch a gun from an unwary holster; but these were merely the routine precautions of sensible men. For these riders were the picked gunfighters of Ben Thorpe's scores of outfits. They did not fear Roper, would not have feared him had he been armed.

Bill Roper had no doubt that Red Kane and perhaps one or two of the others would kill a doomed prisoner for no more reason than Jim Leathers had suggested.

The Lasham camp had been boiling with news as Jim Leathers' men had ridden in at dusk with their prisoner. Much had happened on the range while Leathers had waited out Bill Roper at the Fork Creek camp. The news that had reached

tion of his sweetheart, Jody Gordon, and her father. After breaking Thorpe in Texas, Roper conducted a great raid upon Thorpe's vast herds in Montana. Jody was captured by seven of Thorpe's men. Roper and Shoshone Wilce res-

Lasham's southwest camp was broken, and seemed to have been little understood by the men who had brought it; but Roper, with his inside knowledge of the force he had turned loose against Lasham, could piece together its meaning well enough. Lasham's southwest outpost, with its big herds of picked cattle wintering in this deepest and richest of the Montana grass, had been more powerfully manned than any other Lasham camp. But twice in the past week frantic calls for reinforcements from the outfits to the east had drained most of this man power away—first five picked gunfighters, then a dozen cowboys more, until only five men had been left.

The messengers who had killed their ponies to come for help had brought the camp a fragmentary story which gave Roper the deepest satisfaction.

In their tales of incredible losses, of raiders who struck night after night at far separated points, driving cattle unheard-of distances to disappear weirdly in the northern wastes, Roper read the success of his Great Raid.

Dry Camp Pierce was sweeping westward across Montana like a destroying wind; by unexpected driving, by speed of movement, by wild



Dry Camp Pierce was sweeping westward across Montana.

riding relays which punished themselves no less than the cattle they drove, Dry Camp was feeding an increasing stream of Lasham beef into the hands of Iron Dog's bands, who spirited the beef forever from the face of Montana. By the very boldness of its conception and the wild savagery of its execution the unbelievable Great Raid was meeting with success.

And now Dry Camp had struck even deeper than Roper had planned, lifting the best of Lasham's beeves from almost within gunshot of Lasham's strongest camp. So well had Dry Camp planned, and so steadily did the luck hold, that a full day had passed before the loss inflicted by the raiders was discovered. The five remaining cowboys at the southwest camp were only tightening their cinches as Jim Leathers rode in.

Most of the Leathers party had joined the Lasham men in pursuit of Dry Camp's raiders. Only Jim Leathers himself and the unwilling Red Kane remained to convoy Roper to Ben Thorpe at Sundance.

Because of the confusion involved in the organization of the pursuit, the night was now far gone; already it was long past midnight.

"There's still another reason," Red Kane said, "why it would be better to hang him now. Suppose that wild bunch of his knows he's here?"

"How the devil would they know that?" Leathers said with disgust.

"Maybe they was scouting us with spy glasses as we come over the trail today."

"If they was, they would have landed on us right then, in place of waiting till we got into camp."

"Maybe the girl run to them—"

"The girl! You make me sick."

"Have it your own way."

"You're darned right I'll have it my own way. I don't want to hear no more about it. And I'll tell you this: if your trigger finger gets itchy while you're on watch tonight, you better soak it in a pan of water, and leave the gun be. Because if anything comes up while you're on watch such that you got to shoot him, by God, next thing you got to shoot me—you understand?"



cued her in a surprise attack. Shoshone and Jody rode to a prearranged spot, but Roper was captured while fighting a rear guard action. While waiting for Roper to meet them, Jody saw Shoshone fall down, dead.

"I guess it could be done," Red Kane said nastily. Leathers ignored this, and Red Kane disappeared. This time the door shut after him.

Leathers said, "Get me a drink." Marquita unhesitatingly set out a bottle and a glass on the table beside Jim Leathers' elbow.

"A deck of cards," Leathers said. She produced this, too.

Marquita strolled over to Leathers, the high heels of her slippers clicking lazily on the puncheon floor. "Why are you so cross with me?" she asked reproachfully. She moved behind Jim Leathers, and slowly ran her fingers through his hair.

"Ain't going to get you a thing," Jim Leathers said sourly.

"No?" said Marquita. For a moment one hand was lost in the folds of her skirt; then, deftly, unhurriedly, she planted the muzzle of a .38 against the back of Jim Leathers' neck.

There was a moment of absolute silence, absolute immobility. Jim Leathers' eyes were perfectly still upon Bill Roper's face, as still as his hands, in one of which a playing card hung suspended. But though his face did not notably change, Marquita, with her .38 pressed hard against the back of the gunman's neck, had turned white; her mouth worked as she tried to speak, and her wide eyes were upon Bill Roper in terrified appeal. Perhaps no more than a second could have passed in that way, but to them all it seemed as if time had stopped, so that that little fraction of eternity held them motionless forever.

Bill Roper, moving up and forward, exploded into action smoothly, like a cat. It was the length of the room between them that saved Jim Leathers then.

Leathers twisted, lightning fast. Marquita's gun blazed into the floor as her wrist swept down in the grip of Leathers' left hand; and Bill Roper checked a yard from the table as Leathers' gun flashed into sight, becoming instantly steady. Marquita sagged away from Leathers, and her gun clattered upon the puncheons; but although Leathers' whole attention was concentrated upon Roper, Marquita's wrist remained locked in his grasp.

The gunfighter's voice was more hard and cold than the steel of his gun; it was as hard and cold as his eyes.

"Get back there where you was," Bill Roper shrugged and moved back.

Leathers flung Marquita away from him and with his left hand picked up her gun as the door of the storeroom was torn open and Red Kane bulged in.

"What the—"

"This thing come behind me and stuck a gun in my neck," Leathers told him.

"The devil! You hurt?"

"Hell, no! I took it away from her."

Gently, tentatively, his long fingers ran over his wounded leg. That bullet wound in his thigh must have tortured him unexpectably through the two days in the saddle; and it must have been jerking at his nerves now with red-hot hooks, roused by the swift action that had preserved his command.

His face had turned gray so that the black circles under his eyes made them seem to burn from death's-head hollows, and his face, which had changed so little in this moment of action was relaxed into an ugly contortion. Slowly the gray color was turning to the purple of a dark and terrible anger.

"By God," said Red Kane. "I told you we should have hung him!"

"You told me right," Jim Leathers said. The burn of his eyes never for a moment left Bill Roper's face. "You was right and I was wrong. I should have hung him at the start."

A pleasurable hope came into Red Kane's face. "Well—it ain't too late!"

"No, it ain't too late. Tie his hands."

Keeping Roper between himself and Leathers, so that his partner's gun bore steadily upon Roper's belt buckle, Kane lashed Roper's hands behind him. The frost-stiff rope bit deep.

"Tie up this girl, too," Leathers ordered when Kane had finished. "I want her to see this show."

Marquita said, "I'm sorry, Bill." Her voice was broken by hard, jerking sobs, and tears were running down her face; yet somehow her words sounded dull and dead. "I did the best I could."

"You did fine," Roper said. "That was a game try." Hobbling on his stiff leg, Leathers moved to the outfit, flung it open; coatless, he stopped and signaled Red Kane back with one hand.

"Red, get back! Get out of line!" With the quick instinct of a man who has always been in trouble, Red Kane jumped back into the room, carrying Bill Roper with him. They all could hear now the sound of running horses.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Fine Wale Corduroy Answers School Bell and Campus Call

By CHERIE NICHOLAS



WHEN the school bell peals forth its summons to classroom and campus environments over this land, corduroy will be one of the first to answer the call.

Not the old-fashioned kind of corduroy, that was stiff and unmanageable, but an educated kind that has learned it must be fine to be smart, and lightweight and drapable, as well as long wearing.

School and college girls know this very new and modern corduroy as cordurella, while the male contingent call theirs cordurex. The Latin students in the class will understand why. It's just another instance how the girls have taken of late to copying boys' fashions for corduroy, which used to be almost exclusively a male fabric.

And now look at it! Now whole families go corduroy-clad these days from father, big brother to Junior and from mother and big sister on down from the teen-age to the littlest daughter of the household. Not only have the girls taken over the fabric, but they've taken it in slacks and shirts and jackets that the boys wear, as well as in their own feminine dresses and suits.

There's no end to the types and styles that are fashioned of corduroy. Take jackets, for example. Pets of the campus, are the convenient wear-with-everything jackets, of the fine lightweight modern corduroy, such as are shown, boy and girl fashion, at the top of the group illustrated. Though they go with any kind of campus clothes, men like them best with slacks of the same material, but often in different color, while the girls like free-striding skirts.

Varied types of jackets are available. There are plain, classic single-breasted buttoned styles, fly front closings with either buttons or slide fasteners, blazer types with the edges bound in contrast, cardigan styles, fitted jackets and loose

jackets. In fact, a jacket for every age and figure.

Skirts, too, are very versatile. The favorite is simplicity itself, cut bias with a center front seam and having plenty of room for free-striding. For variety, there are gored skirts, made with the ribs in the alternate gores running one gore horizontally and the next vertically. Dutch boy pockets give a swank look and a favored trimming trick is a line of contrasting color piping around the hem top.

Gay skirts to wear with sweaters are a "must have" in any college wardrobe. For the striking skirt worn by the girl reclining in the foreground of the illustration, cordurella is used in three contrasting colors, beige, brown and brick red, the usual order of things being reversed by putting the lightest tone at the bottom. The jacket is beige.

To the right in the picture you see cordurella presented in a dressier mood, for this modern corduroy is really choice looking and makes up beautifully for afternoon wear. The western influence has scattered metal stud trimming over many costumes that never heard the word "cowboy." Witness this smartly tailored fly-front frock of cordurella. Gold studs decorate the belt and the pocket flaps in the manner of the most ornate cowboy trappings, yet the frock is far more suggestive of the luncheon table than of the corral.

Jerkins or weskits are also making a place for themselves in cordurella school wardrobes. The suits have many an interesting style detail, such as peplum jackets, weskit-type jackets, high skirt bands in peasant fashion, novel closings such as metal daggers instead of buttons. Military touches are not missing either.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Corduroy Outfit



Corduroy is regarded as an outstanding current fabric success. This clever outfit is enough to set the heart of any little fashion-wise daughter a-flutter with joy. It is a classic shirt-type dress made of the new velvet-like ribbed cordurella. Durable and handsome, this fabric is making conversation because of its likable qualities. Gold star buttons down the front and on the pockets add to the thrill of this jaunty costume. The Scotch cap has matching gold stars.

Knitted Accessories Is New Autumn Style

Add the fashion "touch that tells" to your tweeds and your plaids, your velveteens and your corduroys, with knitted accessories. It's considered smart style to match stocking cap, scarf and gloves that are either knitted or crocheted.

Women are crocheting their hats also and trimming them in ruches of loopyarn. Wide brim felts with crocheted bands or entire crocheted crowns lean also to the new trend.

Crochet handbags are enormous in size and are worked in ways to ensemble perfectly with the knitted details that complement the costume.

Irish Crochet Lace and Fine Venise Trimming

At the lace counters you can get circular Irish crochet by the yard for collars and cuffs and trimming purposes. The same is true in regard to handsome Venise laces. The latter is also used in allover patterning for blouses to wear with afternoon suits, or to top party skirts of yards and yards of tulle.

Quilted Velvets

Very handsome and very new looking are the coats and suits fashioned of quilted fabric, especially those in velvet and wool. The girl going away to school will take keen delight in a quilted velveteen jacket to wear with her plaid skirt.

FARM TOPICS

SOIL ELEMENTS VITAL FACTOR

For Fertile Farm Lands And Future Yield.

By DR. W. A. ALBRECHT
(Department of Soils, University of Missouri)

If we Americans paid as much attention to our soils as we do to our cars or radios, the matter of soil fertility would not be the mystic business we often think it is.

It is high time we learned a little about soil chemistry — at least enough so that chemical terms such as calcium, nitrogen, phosphorus and potash are no more difficult to comprehend than other terms like carburetor, differential, superhydrodyne, static, radio beam.

There is nothing really mysterious about the elements which combine to promote soil fertility.

Calcium, or lime, that serves as part of the growing plant's protein-making activity and is needed so badly by most soils before legumes can be grown, is so common it ought to be a household word on every American farm.

Nitrogen, the distinguishing element in protein for which all forms of life struggle, is getting scarcer in our soils and should be more fully appreciated for its elusiveness. Phosphorus, which enters into combination with nitrogen to make protein, the secret stuff of life, growth and reproduction, must likewise be added to other items about which we must familiarize ourselves further.

Phosphorus is likewise becoming more deficient in our soils, in spite of the fact that this country has more and larger deposits of phosphatic material than any other in the world. We must learn more, too, about potash which is the balance wheel that promotes healthy growth, enables the growing plant better to use the nitrogen supply and develop resistance to disease. Like the others, potash has been steadily drained out of our soils.

It is fitting that all of us should make closer acquaintance with the foundations of our farm crops and, in turn, the foundation of our very bodies—namely, the soil itself and the elements which make it productive.

USDA Purchases Cheese On Wisconsin Exchange

Purchases of cheese under the Food-for-Defense program are in the future, to be made on the exchange at Plymouth, Wis., according to an announcement by the department of agriculture. The new method follows the invitation of the Wisconsin Cheese exchange to use its facilities. The present method of buying cheese through the acceptance of bids from manufacturers and others will be continued in addition to purchasing on the exchange.

Department officials said that by buying cheese on the exchange to supplement the present bid method, purchase operations should be more directly reflected in cheese market prices with increased benefits to milk producers. Exchange officials have indicated that trading rules would be modified to permit buying in accordance with the department's usual specifications.

Between March 15, when buying operations under the Food-for-Defense program began, and July 16 the department bought over 46,700,000 pounds of cheese. Most of the purchases have been of large styles of cheese (cheddars and twins) which are preferred for export. Recent prices paid at midwestern points have been between 22 and 23 cents per pound, including differentials of age of cheese and kind of pack. Some daisies, or small styles of cheese, have been bought previously, with the usual trade price differential of one-half cent per pound over large styles, in order to make it possible for the industry to utilize all of its cheese-making facilities.

Manufacturers are now urged by the department of agriculture to shift from the manufacture of daisies to large styles of cheese in order to meet export requirements more adequately. Cheese buying operations of the department will continue to be concentrated on the large styles.

Cheese and other foodstuffs bought in the department's program can be used for domestic distribution to public aid families and for school lunches, to meet requirements for the Red Cross for shipment to war refugee areas, for transfer to other countries under the terms of the Lend-Lease act.

Farm Notes

A school of nutrition, said to be the first of its kind, has been established at Cornell university. Five colleges will co-operate in offering instruction.

The unusually favorable position of the nation's poultry industry is reflected in the June output of more than 4,000,000,000 eggs, largest for the month since 1930.

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Aiding Another

The only way in which one human being can properly attempt to influence another is by encouraging him to think for himself, instead of endeavoring to instill ready-made opinions into his head. —Sir Leslie Stephen.

The best way to find out what to send soldiers in camp is to ask the soldiers themselves. Surveys among the men with the colors show cigarettes and smoking tobacco head the list. Actual sales records from service stores in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard show the largest-selling cigarette is Camel. Prince Albert Smoking Tobacco is well-known as the "National Joy Smoke." A carton of Camels or a pound tin of Prince Albert is always welcome, doubly welcome around the end of the month. Local tobacco dealers are featuring these brands as ideal gifts for men in the service.—Adv.

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IN THIS PAPER