

Pay Gravel

By HUGH PENDEXTER



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(Continued from page 3)
 "Got in the habit of carrying these," San Juan explained as he produced two double-barrel Remington derringers, forty-one caliber.

They ascended a high ridge that crossed their course at right angles and came to the trail which connected the agencies with the stronghold of the northern Sioux. The summer campaign of 1876 had brought no defeats to the Sioux and Cheyennes. The latter, whose cornfields once grew along the Bellefourche, claimed a victory over General Crook as the result of the June fight on the Rosebud. Custer's death a week later marked the peak of Sioux supremacy.

Curiously enough it was the federal government that started the gold rush to the debatable hills by sending an expedition to confirm the many border stories about gold to be found there. Once the cry was raised in 'seventy-four, "Custer's soldiers have found gold in the Black Hills! Hills of gold! Gold from the grass-roots down!" the red man got together his best guns, accumulated much fixed ammunition, saw that his war ponies were fit, made new medicine, smoked war tobacco, and with the spring grass carried the pipe against the frontier.

All too well did the Indian understand what was about to happen to their homeland now that the precious metal had been found upon it. The lesson had been taught in California, Colorado, Idaho and Montana.

Many prospectors had interpreted the government's activity in 'seventy-four as an invitation for them to rush to the hills. But soldiers were sent to overhaul the trains, burn the wagons and imprison the fortune seekers.

The Indians, primed from the start to resent the inevitable stampede, did not need his example; but, having beheld it, they pronounced it good and proceeded to burn a score of trains where the government had destroyed one wagon, to kill a hundred whites where the Great Father in Washington had imprisoned one. Thus while San Juan Joe and Dinsdale were warily making down the highest ridge in the chain to strike the Cheyenne river the hill towns were praying for Crook to march down from the Little Missouri country into Deadwood Gulch.

The river was reached at dusk, and men and horses enjoyed the first drink of water since morning. They made the crossing without much trouble and were soon drying their clothes in the ranch house.

"What's ahead of us now?" asked Dinsdale as they finished steaming their garments and sat down to an appetizing supper of fried venison, hot bread and coffee.

"The worst of the lot," San Juan cheerfully answered. "But it's a short dash. Sudden death rather than a long lingering illness. If it's in the cards that we make it there's no reason in worrying. If the cards run against us, worrying won't help any."

After supper they inquired of a white-haired man in plains dress about the two wagons they had been expecting to come up with.

"They 'lowed to wait at the soldiers' camp near the mouth of Red canyon," mumbled the ancient. "If the boss of that outfit—called himself Belman an' has his woman along—has got any brains he'll wait till a big train comes along."

For Dinsdale's enlightenment the gambler informed him:

"Red canyon is called 'The Gate of Hell.' Regular death trap if the Injuns jump us. No chance to hide up. Walls high and steep. No place to run once they've cut you off in both directions. Seven outfits slaughtered in there since May."

"The time to go through is at night. Injuns don't take kindly to night work. My idea is to stay here till tomorrow afternoon, then make a dash for it. I've been through the canyon four times this season, this making the fifth. Once we're through we'll be only twenty-five miles from Custer City. I don't mind the devils much if they don't get me cornered."

CHAPTER II

The Gate of Hell.

Overnight the wind shifted from the east, whence comes the rain to the hills country, and was blowing smartly from the south when the two travelers sat down to breakfast. There was no occasion for haste, however, as San Juan Joe insisted that they would gain nothing by making the mouth of Red canyon before twilight.

When they swung into the saddle late in the afternoon the old man combed his white beard with his gnarled fingers and called after them: "Ye won't get through. Ye're darned fools to try it. Wait for a big train."

"It's a death-trap on an open road," San Juan told Dinsdale as they galloped along. "But if it's in the cards for us to get through we'll go through. The cards have been right every trip I've made this season. They had to be before I'd start out."

"What did the cards say last night?" curiously asked Dinsdale.

"Showed trouble in the canyon. Seemed to be sort of blind. But you and I showed up all right at the end. We'll know just what it means when we get to it. I'll try them again when we reach the soldiers' camp."

It was late afternoon when the gambler and Dinsdale rode into the soldiers' camp on Red Canyon creek. The camp was defended by rifle-pits, and only a few men were present, the others being off on a scout. From a sergeant the wayfarers learned that two wagons with eight men had left for the canyon shortly after the noon hour, having tired of waiting for another outfit to come up.

"I tried to get them to wait until some of the men out scouting got back, so we could send an escort through with them. But they wouldn't listen," said the sergeant.

Dinsdale asked no questions as to when they should set out. He knew that his companion was familiar with the route and its dangers. At sunset they ate supper, messing with the soldiers, and then smoked for a while. Finally San Juan Joe rose briskly and glanced at the moon crawling above the horizon, greatly magnified and blood-red.

"Looks like all h—l was burning," lazily remarked Dinsdale.

"It usually is," was the grave reply. "Means that some one is cutting the deuce in this deal."

"What do the cards say! have you tried them?"

"Ran them off while you was tending your nag. They run all right for us. We'll go."

Dinsdale glanced at his watch as they entered the mouth of the canyon and observed that it was eight o'clock. The gambler took the lead as the faint light vanished and permitted his horse to pick the way through the thick darkness. Dinsdale's animal followed closely. Gradually Dinsdale developed the illusion of being surrounded by immeasurable open country until it seemed that he was free to gallop in any direction.

Then came a more disquieting fancy: He was riding along the crest of a ridge. The way scarcely afforded room for his horse's cautious hoofs, and one false step would be equivalent to a drop into oblivion. Once, when his horse stumbled, he gave an involuntary little cry.

"What's the trouble?" softly called San Juan from out of the blackness.

"My nerves fooled me," sheepishly explained Dinsdale.

Soon after this incident Dinsdale's objective senses ousted all fancies. San Juan also heard it, the ominous sound of several guns fired in a vol-

ley, quickly followed by two or three isolated shots. The firing was faint as if far off.

The gambler backed his horse beside Dinsdale's and softly whispered: "Told you some one was cutting the deuce."

"It's quiet enough now," murmured Dinsdale.

"Too quiet. Means it's all over—all ended—all the chips in the pot. Some one has cashed in for keeps."

"We go ahead?"

"Yes."

(To be continued)

Albany Directory

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News Notes

(Continued from page 1)

Plans were made at a meeting in Birkenhead last week toward organization of a Pioneer's society of the Nehalem valley.

Portland was chosen as the meeting place for the 1925 annual state convention of osteopathic physicians at the convention in Albany.

Non-resident motor vehicles in Oregon on June 13 showed an increase of 3 1/2 per cent when compared with figures compiled a year ago, according to a report prepared by the state highway department.

A cougar, out of its environment and thoroughly frightened at the prospect of no trees to climb nor underbrush to hide in, utilized the manger of an old barn near Wasco as a place of refuge and was killed with a shotgun.

The sale of cigarettes at all construction camps and at two summer resorts—those at Odell and Crescent lakes—in the Deschutes national forest has been stopped, as a measure for protection of timber against fire, it is announced.

Farmers in Umatilla county, and particularly those in the wheat belt who own bottom land where some alfalfa and green stuff are grown, have launched into warfare against a pest of grasshoppers that threatens to clean up some fields.

On his return home a few minutes after he had watched a shipment of caskets unloaded and had jestingly picked out the coffin he would prefer to be buried in, Matthew B. Keys, 69, dropped dead in Pendleton as a result of heart disease.

The state treasurer's office has started action in Lakeview to collect over \$150,000 from the executors of the Bernard Daly estate, covering inheritance tax upon that part of the estate that was left to the Bernard Daly educational fund.

Mrs. Anna Stevens, 71, wife of Jasper H. Stevens, and a pioneer of the Grande Ronde valley, died at La Grande. Mrs. Stevens was a daughter of George W. Webb, former state treasurer, who died a few years ago at the age of 96 years.

Dr. James A. McBride of Pasadena, Cal., his brother, T. A. McBride, of the supreme court, and Justice Bur-

nett are planning a visit to the McBride and Burnett homes in Yamhill county, where the three were born more than 70 years ago.

The Deschutes river flow is the lowest in recent years, running 1400 second feet, in spite of the fact that stored water at the Crane Prairie and Crescent lake reservoirs is re-enforcing the flow. Lack of snow in the mountains is given as the cause.

Taxes to be collected in Oregon during 1924, based on the valuations for 1923, aggregate \$40,155,083.30, according to a summary prepared by the state tax commission. This is a slight reduction when compared with the tax collections for the year 1923.

Le Roy Ledgerwood, manager of the Mehama fish hatchery, states that an attempt was made recently to dynamite the salmon racks across the mouth of the little north fork of the Santiam river, to allow the salmon to go through to the headwaters of that river.

Anticipating that forest fires will soon break out again, Nelson F. Macduff, supervisor of the Cascade national forest, has issued an order for all fire lookouts to take their stations again. They had been off duty for some time owing to recent rains and lack of fires.

The work of pouring concrete in the construction of the new dam in Immigrant creek, which is a part of the Talent irrigation project in southern Oregon, has been started, according to information received at the office of the state engineer. It will require several months to complete the dam.

A county-wide organization of sportsmen's organizations of Umatilla county was completed at a meeting in Pendleton attended by hunters and fishermen from Hermiston, Helix, Pilot Rock, Echo, Umatilla, Adams and Pendleton. The name of the organization is the Umatilla Fish and Game Protective association.

Taxation of electric light and power companies in Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Utah has increased 42 per cent in the last three years, according to statistics assembled by George L. Myers, president of the Northwest Electric Light and Power association, and presented at the association's annual convention at Gearheart.



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