

# THE SMOKY YEARS

By ALAN LE MAY

W.N.U. Release

## INSTALLMENT IV THE STORY SO FAR:

Dusty King and Lew Gordon were joint owners of the vast King-Gordon range which stretched from Texas to Montana. When building up this string of ranches, they continually had to fight the unscrupulous Ben Thorpe. Thorpe ri-

valued King-Gordon in power and wealth, but he had gained his position through wholesale cattle rustling and gunplay. King outbid Thorpe in an auction of valuable grasslands; the same afternoon he was killed. Bill Roper, King's adopt-

ed son, found out that he had been shot down by Thorpe and two aides. Against the strong opposition of Gordon, Bill decided to start a cattle war against Thorpe. Bill went to tell his sweetheart, pretty Jody Gordon, about his plans.

and the southwest outpost of the old Bar-Circle. I want two of the border camps; Willow Creek will do for one, and the Dry Saddle Crossing will do for the other. I want the new Bull Wagon camp, and the K-G horse ranch at Stillwater."

"The brands are going to be terrible mixed up," Gordon said. "I'm only taking such cattle as are running under odd brands; all our regular brands stay with you. I've placed my camps so that your stock can be worked as before. Except maybe the Pot Hook, and we'll come to some special deal—"

Gordon threw his pencil down. "You're not getting anything out of this that anybody can use," he declared. "I think I'll know how to use it. Later on I'll send you a list of the northern camps I want; they'll amount to about the same as the ones I want in Texas."

"It sure sounds to me like you're wanting me to buy you out in cash," Gordon said. "And if that's what's

in your mind—I can't do it, Bill. There just ain't the money."

"There won't be any trouble about that. In Texas I may need up to fifty thousand dollars; but I don't have to have it all at once. It'll work out easy enough, Lew."

Even the rough provisional terms that they were noting here provided innumerable complications. In the next few hours, as they worked it out, many a consideration came up that Bill Roper hadn't thought of.

It was near morning before Roper left to seek out Dry Camp Pierce to complete his plans.

Bill Roper headed south shortly after sunrise. Today Dry Camp would be going east by railroad, beginning the long roundabout way which would bring him to Texas long before Bill. With his camps as a secure base, Pierce was to begin the missionary work which would lay the foundations for Bill Roper's wild bunch.

Lew Gordon had shaken hands with him gravely at his departure; an uncomfortable job for Bill, which he was glad to get over with. But Jody Gordon—he had not seen her again at all. He was thinking of her now as she had flared up at him the night before, warlike as a little eagle, but very lovely still, with the fire in her eyes.

Watchful always, he knew when, two miles off, a horseman dropped from a lookout just at the crest of a rise; and he knew that the rider had seen him and was moving to intercept his trail.

He did not have so long to wait as he had thought. No more than ten minutes had passed when the unknown rider came dusting around the shoulder of a sand hill and headed toward him at the dead run. Roper turned his horse broadside to the approach and waited.

The rider was Jody Gordon. She appeared to have taken to the saddle in a hurry, for she wasn't wearing chaps, or anything else she should have been riding in. What distance she had come she had come fast, for her pony's flanks were heaving.

"You sure punish that horse," he said. "I've got no call to save him. I'm not going any place."

There was a little silence, awkward for Bill Roper, as she sat and looked at him. The lower lids of her eyes were violet, so that he knew she had not slept; but he could not read her faintly smoky eyes.

She was more pale than he had ever seen her, and the passivity of her face made her look like a little girl again.

"Sure sorry," he said, "that I didn't get to say good-by to you. Didn't seem like you were any place around."

For a second or two the familiar twinkle seemed about to come into her eyes. "Did you hunt real hard?"

"Well—maybe I didn't. I guess it kind of seemed like we'd already said everything there was to be said."

"Maybe," she said slowly, "I didn't say everything I ought to have said. I want you to know this: 'When you ride out of my life there isn't going to be anything left in it.'"

"Jody," he said, "are you trying to turn me back now?"

Her only answer was a little hopeless motion of her hands.

"Your father and I put in four hours last night, roughing out the terms of my split from King-Gordon. Think back yourself—did you ever see me turned back from something I figured I ought to do?"

She shook her head, and her face had even less color than before. "What did you say to my father?"

"What did he tell you I said?"

"That I—quit you."

"Well—didn't you?"

"Don't you know," she said crazily. "I wouldn't ever do that?"

He was silent, his eyes on his buckskin gloves as he adjusted his rope, the buckle of his rifle boot.

"I don't care anything about King-Gordon," Jody said. "I don't care whether you stay in King-Gordon, or get out, or where you go, or what you do. I'd go with you if you wanted me to go; and if you don't know that you don't know anything at all"

"Jody—you mean that?"

"In King-Gordon you were on the way to big things. But I don't care anything about that. Let the break-up with my father go through. Quit King-Gordon without two bits to your name. Take the least outpost camp there is under the brand, and let him have the rest. I'll go with you, and stay with you; and I'll help you in every way I can to build something of our own."

He wanted to say something, anything; but he found he could not speak at all.

Jody said, almost hysterically, "Aren't you ever going to say anything?"

Bill Roper mumbled to his saddle horn. "Didn't know you felt that way. . . Wouldn't ever be any call—any reason—for you to let go all bolts like that."

She was leaning toward him now, her voice gentle, coaxing, very tender. "Our own little old outfit—any outfit, any place—don't you see what a happy place we could make that be? A place where we could plant trees near the water, and watch them grow into big trees; and we'd be there together—"

Roper shot a quick glance at Jody, and immediately sent his eyes away again, as far as they could reach. If he had looked at her again, perhaps he would have kicked his pony stirrup to stirrup with hers and picked her out of the saddle and kissed her mouth, and kept her close to him—then, and forever. But he sat motionless on his waiting pony.

"Look," he said at last—"Look—if you mean that, come with me. Come with me, now."

He could hardly hear her as she said, "Don't you think you ought to tell me where you're going?"

"Dry Camp Pierce is on his way, by a quicker way than mine is. If he don't fall down there'll be the start of a wild bunch waiting for me when I land in the Big Bend Country. I figure to take that bunch, and build to it, and add on. After that—well, you know what comes after that."

"And now, you're asking me to swing with that?"

"Jody, I've already told you what I've got to do."

The silence stretched out until you could have hung a saddle on it, and this time Bill's eyes were on Jody, and hers were on the saddle horn.

Slowly she shook her head.

After a minute he said, "I guess that settles it, doesn't it?"

"I guess it does."

Her face seemed blind, and she was like a ghost of Jody Gordon. Suddenly Bill Roper knew that if he did not take the trail he had chosen now, he would never take it at all.

"You sure, Jody? You won't come?"

Again she shook her head.

A long, loose end of Bill's rope was in his hand, though he never remembered taking it down. Hardly knowing what he did, he struck the spurs into the buckskin pony. The snap of the rope's end knocked a flying gout of fur from the rump of the black pack mule, and they were on the trail—the long trail, the dry trail, the trail of a hopeless war.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



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(TO BE CONTINUED)

# PATTERNS SEWING CIRCLE



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the crisp frill and buttons that trim the frock, with a charmingly soft, somewhat formal effect. Silk print, flat crepe or sheers are smart for this.

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## Ask Me Another A General Quiz

### The Questions

1. What is a characteristic feature of Gothic architecture?
2. "Let us eat and drink; for tomorrow we die" is a quotation from what?
3. What is the most widely used name of saints?
4. What took place during the "Hundred Days" in French history?
5. Elizabeth Blackwell was famous as what?
6. What of the following makes up the greatest per cent of the air we breathe: hydrogen, oxygen, or nitrogen?
7. How thick is the bark of some of the giant Sequoia trees?

### The Answers

1. The pointed arch.
2. The Bible—Isa. 22:13.
3. Valentine has been the most widely used name of saints, one recently compiled list containing 52 of them.
4. Napoleon's second reign (after his return from Elba, from March 20 to June 28, 1815).
5. The first woman doctor of medicine.
6. Nitrogen (78.06 per cent).
7. Many trees have bark that is two feet thick, and a root system that spreads over an area of three acres.

# TIPS to Gardeners

## CHOOSE BEANS WISELY

THE gardener should be well acquainted with the many available varieties of stringless beans, if he is to get the most from his bean crop.

If earliness is the principal interest, the gardener should select either Bountiful (green-podded) or Golden Wax (yellow). Bountiful is excellent for use when small, in shoe-string size. It is also a good choice for home canning, for it produces abundantly.

The gardener interested in yield over a long season should select both a bush bean, and a pole bean. The pole beans begin producing when the yield from the bush beans tapers off.

Kentucky Wonder is one of the best all-purpose pole beans. It provides good quality snap beans. When past the snap stage, the pods may be cut up, and cooked southern style. Later, this bean may be used in the green shell stage. In the more mature stage the beans may be used in baking or in soup.



## Said in Brief

Florist—Say it with flowers, sir. What about a dozen roses? Macpherson (in love)—Aye! but I'm a man of few words—two will do!

The human body is a wonderful piece of mechanism. If you put a man on the back, you make his head swell.

Oh, Thank You!  
"Excuse me, does this train stop at Regent's Park?"  
"Yes; get off one station before I do."

By Practice  
Little six-year-old Bertie was telling his big brother about the nurse who visited his school. "Is she a good looker?" John asked. "Of course she is," replied Bertie. "She looks down our throats every week."

## Baking Success is no secret—Use



# CLABBER GIRL

## BAKING POWDER

To bake that Tasty Easter Cake

**Waters Return**  
That which the fountain sends forth returns again to the fountain.—Longfellow.

**What Is Right**  
It is not who is right, but what is right, that is of importance.—Huxley.

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**Might of Moral Courage**  
Moral courage renders a man in the pursuit or defense of right superior to the fear of reproach, opposition, or contempt.—S. G. Goodrich.

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Long ailments wear out pain, and long hopes joy.—Stanislaus.

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