

# GUNLOCK RANCH

by Frank H. Spearman  
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SYNOPSIS

Sleepy Cat, desert town of the Southwest, is celebrating the Fourth of July. Jane Van Tambel, beautiful daughter of Gus Van Tambel, hated owner of Gunlock ranch, has arrived from the East for the first time. She watches the Frontier Day celebration in company with Dr. Carpy, crusty, tender-hearted friend of the community. Henry Sawdy of the Circle Dot ranch, tricked in a fake horse race the day before by Dave McCrossen, foreman at Gunlock, plans revenge. He enters Bill Denison, a handsome young Texan wrangler, in the rodeo which McCrossen is favored to win, and lays heavy bets on him with Harry Boland, saloonkeeper and enemy of McCrossen. Unknown to the crowd, Denison is a champion horseman, McCrossen and the young stranger tie in the various events. They are then asked to propose their own stunts. McCrossen winning the toss, picks up a handkerchief from the ground riding full speed, facing backward. Denison easily follows suit.

CHAPTER I—Continued

It was now the Texan's turn. Sawdy ran out on the track to his side. "Give him the saddle-and-bridle trick," he whispered.

The wrangler, still breathing fast, demurred. "He's seen it done. Probably he can do it himself, Sawdy."

"No matter. I'll make a hit, tire him out."

"I'm getting tired of this show myself. It's been pretty long," objected the rider. "Leave it to me, will you? I'll give him one he's never seen—one you've never seen." There was a further whispered conference.

"Go to it!" exclaimed Sawdy, after a moment, seemingly confident of his representative. Then he turned to the little grandstand.

"Ladies 'n' gentlemen an' honorable judges," he began. "Circle Dot has tried to contribute in a humble way to your entertainment this afternoon. You're all anxious to see this contest, grand as it has been, brought to a decision. Our entry for the prize will now present a feat never before seen in Sleepy Cat."

Reining to the middle of the track, the wrangler drew from a buttoned breast pocket of his jersey a packet of cigarette papers and a small sack of tobacco. Seated on his pawing horse, he rolled his cigarette, put away the makings, hung the cigarette on his lip, and lifted his hat as he looked up at the spectators and felt in another pocket for a match. While doing so he awkwardly dropped the cigarette; it fell from his lip to the dusty track. He bent over in the saddle to look regretfully down at the cigarette where it lay; then turned his horse and slowly circled the offending object as he carefully scrutinized the lie.

They looked in vain circles for a trace of the cigarette; stirred up the dust where it might be hidden. But the wrangler, riding back toward them, held the damaged cigarette between the thumb and the forefinger of his right hand.

Boland was wild. He rushed out to join the judges. "It's a plain trick!" he shouted. "He pretended to pick up one cigarette an' had another in his hand."

"Hell!" blurted out Bill Pardaloe. "Where's the cigarette he dropped here in the first place?" he asked, pointing to the track. "It was right here. I seen it." He appealed to the other judges, "You seen it." The two nodded assent. "What you talkin' about, Bo?" Boland was industriously searching the track. "Find it! But be damned careful you don't try to drop another cigarette like it! Watch him, John," warned Pardaloe, wrought up.

"The horse might have picked it up on his hoof," bellowed Boland. "Yes," commented Selwood. "Yes. Examine the pony's mouth, too, Boland. He may not have swallowed it yet. I say, gentlemen," he added, "the Circle Dot boy has done a clean job. Now let's see McCrossen perform."

But McCrossen, stubbornly rejecting all his backers' entreaties, refused to perform. "Wouldn't I be a sucker to try to beat a man at his own game?" he demanded.

"That trick's no part of frontier ridin'. It's never been done before at a Sleepy Cat celebration."

"It's progress, gentlemen; progress, I call it. If it ain't been done in Sleepy Cat, it's been done plenty at other celebrations. So you," thundered Sawdy, "want a brilliant crowd of fair women and brave men to set here year after year an' be bored stiff with the same old tricks? Gents!" he appealed to the judges, "I call for judgment."

The judges huddled. At a little distance Sawdy and Lefever huddled with the wrangler on the gelding. Presently Lefever stepped over to the judges. "Gents," he announced, "before you de-

Vexed, but unwilling to ignore the growing clamor of the spectators, Jane rose reluctantly, passed the slender gold band over her wrist, and, pausing for an awkward feminine throw, flung it out ungraciously on the track. The crowd applauded. Jane blushed.

The bracelet fell close to the grandstand side of the track. Sawdy thought too close, but the wrangler, riding over, nodded that he could make it.

The wrangler wheeled his horse, and cantered down the track. Wheeling again, he parted his pony's neck and headed up toward the grandstand. Again the pony took the quirt, leaped ahead, and, with the onlookers mostly standing to see and holding their breath, the wrangler dashed for the bracelet.

Once more he swung over to the right of his saddle till he could trail his hand easily along in the dust of the track. With eyes straining and every nerve taut, the wrangler, sighting the shining object, struck for it. At the same instant, out of perfect silence a sudden vicious yell rang from somewhere about the grandstand. The pony, startled, sprang straight sidewise, throwing his rider head first into the dust, and bolted across the track, dragging the wrangler, caught by one foot in the stirrup.

A murmur rose, breaking into cries of anger and shame. Every eye was fixed on the dragging rider.

The pony headed for the inside guard rail of the track fence. Half a dozen Circle Dot riders now shot after him. If the panic-stricken horse should leap the fence, he would dash the wrangler against it, probably to death.

But while the panicky spectators stared, speechless, the wrangler, dragged along at breakneck speed, shook loose his foot and, rolling with the momentum over and over on the track, sprang to his feet, covered with dust. The bolting pony cleared the fence and dashed across the field.

The angry wrangler steadied himself after a step or two, his eyes roving over the faces before him, striving to catch his breath. With his quirt still hanging from his wrist, his hair ruffled and his bronzed features dust-smudged, his shirt torn half off his back, and breathing hard and fast, he stood eyeing the crowd and raised his voice in a loud and clear drawl:

"If the calf that just bellowed for milk isn't too much of a coward to walk down here, I'll agree to bottle-feed him with a quirt."

There were a few applauding laughs, many murmurs, and a general feeling of uneasiness among the spectators.

Suddenly from the midst of a riot of men talking at the end of the grandstand near Jane came a clash of angry voices. The next instant a bald-headed man with keen gray eyes and a dyed mustache, scattering onlookers right and left, pushed his way out of the gathering crowd and, stretching out his arm, yelled at the three Circle Dot cowmen standing on the track beside the contrite pony. "Look-a-here, Texas!" yelled the bald-head, beckoning. "Come here, you! You too, Lefever! Quick!"

"It's Jake Spotts," said the excited Sawdy. "Come on, boys!" With Lefever, and followed by the wrangler, Sawdy hurried to the irate barber's side.

"There's the skunk that yelled," cried Spotts, almost beside himself as he pushed the wrangler forward, and pointed. "That yellow-faced skunk right there, Barney Rebstock!"

The grandstand emptied as if a cyclone had struck it.

"You're a liar," shouted the man accused, a slender, shrill-voiced, sharp-faced ranch hand. "I never did it."

A long-haired, mild voiced Indian standing near him spoke up: "Yes, you did. I stood right behind you. I heard you!"

Jane was sitting so close to the altercation she could have touched the nearest man. She rose in alarm. Dr. Carpy pushed her to his other side. She heard Sawdy thunder, "No more lyn', Barney! There's two witnesses."

That was almost all she could remember. There were a few more sharp words. Then the dusty wrangler, shortening his quirt, sprang at Rebstock, knocked off his hat with one hand, and with the other brought the heavy handle down savagely on Rebstock's forehead. Jane saw the red follow the blow like the cut of a knife.

There was instant uproar. McCrossen sprang forward to defend Rebstock. He was too late. His hand slipped to his gun holster. Carpy, jumping up, stood almost over the brawlers. "Hold on, there! Hold on!" he thundered. "The first man that draws a gun here, I'll run out of Sleepy Cat!"

Dr. Carpy was the only man in Sleepy Cat who could have done it. But his word was the last word in Sleepy Cat. No one cared to face his wrath. He turned to Jane. "Don't be frightened, girl. It's all over."

Cheers greeted the wrangler as he walked back with his cronies to where the contrite pony stood on the track. Although his attire was in much disarray, his manner put his hearers perfectly at ease. "I know," he said to those who had returned to the grandstand, and patting his mount, "that this generally well-behaved little Texas pony is as much ashamed of his conduct as I am, and I know he would like to apologize, if you'll give him a chance."

(TO BE CONTINUED)



Again the Pony Took the Quirt.

Sawdy stepped to the side of the grandstand and, after his usual salutation, began, hat in hand: "Our Circle Dot wrangler seems to be a little awkward today—nervous, maybe. You see, ladies, he hasn't had such a bevy of elegant women to look at for many, many weeks. We've been on a long, hard drive an' haven't seen so much as a picture of a smart girl for nigh three months—no wonder he's nervous."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Carpy and his group. Sawdy, surprised, looked up. "Where?" he demanded. And getting only a laugh, continued:

"Whatever the reason, ladies an' gents, the boy has dropped his cigarette. He's makin' motions to me to pick it up. But it's too much to ask of a fat man. Let him pick up the cigarette himself. Go, boy, go!"

As the wrangler cantered leisurely down the track, Sawdy, as spieler, continued to explain:

"He will now try ridin' at top speed, to pick up his cigarette. If he succeeds, I am sure you will all be willin' to see him enjoy smokin' it, after a hard hour's work. If he fails under these speed conditions, he will retire as gracefully as possible from the track an' turn a similar job over to his esteemed rival. Our wrangler will use the quirt on his pony for the first time today. All we'll ask is, just please give the boy quiet when he rides up."

The wrangler had wheeled his horse fifty yards down the track and sat waiting for Sawdy's signal.

The cowman raised a warning hand. "Are you ready?" The wrangler nodded. "Go!" shouted Sawdy.

Quirting his pony smartly and bending in the saddle as the wiry little gelding sprang in long leaps ahead, the wrangler, nearing the stand, swung over to the right so low in the saddle that he trailed his hand in the dust. He was going very fast, and his job in this straining posture was to locate a narrow smudge of brown paper lying in yellow dust.

CHAPTER II

In the grandstand there was a craning of necks, a straining of eyes, and a hush.

Only the soft clatter of the pony's hoofs as he now flew down toward the grandstand struck the ear. A slender streak of dust rose from where the fingers trailed along the track. As he neared the vicinity of the cigarette, the wrangler lifted his fingers just above the dust and bent his straining eyes ahead. He passed the grandstand like a flash.

As he did so, his right hand was flung out, just once, and his fingers struck at the dust. He dashed ahead, straightened himself gradually in the saddle, and, holding his right hand high, checked the pony and rode slowly back.

The judges clambered down from their stand and ran out on the track.

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## The Mind Meter

By LOWELL HENDERSON

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**The Four-Word Test**

In this test there are four words given in each problem. Three of the four in each case bear a definite relationship to one another; Cross out the one word that does not belong in each problem.

1. Holy, sacred, profane, divine.
2. Tall, squat, lofty, high.
3. Lob, double-play, net ball, ace.
4. New Hampshire, Vermont, Boston, Connecticut.
5. Vain, humble, modest, submissive.
6. Shot put, javelin throw, 100-yard dash, discus throw.
7. Hot, stolid, fiery, ardent.
8. Harvard, Princeton, Vassar, Yale.
9. Tallahassee, Sacramento, Chicago, Baton Rouge.
10. Running, swimming, walking, trotting.

**Answers**

1. Profane.
2. Squat.
3. Double-play.
4. Boston.
5. Vain.
6. 100-yard dash.
7. Stolid.
8. Vassar.
9. Chicago.
10. Swimming.

## Household Questions

Add a tablespoon of cream to roast beef or lamb gravy. It makes it a delicious brown.

Place a glass pie plate over the top of the kettle while making a stew. The stew may then be watched while cooking without lifting the cover or allowing steam to escape.

Drain all juices from fruits or vegetables used for salads before arranging them on the plates. Placing the food in a colander for five minutes is a good idea as then all juices will drain out quickly.

To wash feather pillows soak in soapsuds for several hours, changing the water as it becomes soiled. Then put them through a washing machine or wash them by hand. Rinse them well in clear water and hang them in a sunny place to dry. Turn frequently to change the position of the feathers in the tick.

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HOW 'BOUT TAKIN' A BOAT RIDE, DIZZY? YOU LIKE SPEED?

CAN I GO TOO, JERRY? PLEASE!

LOOK! THERE THEY GO. NOW! GIVE HER MORE GAS, LARRY! THEY'RE GETTING AWAY!

MAYBE OLD DIZ CAN STOP 'EM FOR YOU

I GOT HER UP TO THE LAST NOTCH NOW! WE'LL NEVER CATCH THEM

HOLY SMOKES!

WHAT HIT JOE? HE'S OUT LIKE A LIGHT!

I'D GIVE A LOT TO HAVE SOME OF YOUR ENERGY

IT CAN BE HAD, SON, AND ONE WAY TO GET IT IS TO EAT GOOD, NOURISHING FOOD—LIKE GRAPE-NUTS. I'VE BEEN EATING IT NOW FOR 11 YEARS—AND IT CAN'T BE BEAT

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