

WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE'S

To Ride the River With

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SYNOPSIS

Ruth Chiswick of L C ranch, obsessed by fear of danger to her outspoken father, Lee, from a band of lawless rustlers headed by Sperm Howard, decides to save him by eloping with young Lou Howard, Sperm's son, and comes to the town of Tail Holt to meet him. While in Yell Sanger's store, a crooked stranger enters, sizes up the situation, and when a drunken cowboy, Jim Pender, rides in and starts shooting, protects Ruth, while Lou Howard hides. Disgusted with Lou's cowardice, Ruth calls off the elopement, and sends the stranger for her father at the gambling house across the street. There the stranger, calling himself Jeff Gray, meets Morgan Norris, a killer, Curly Connor, Kansas, Mile High, Sid Hunt, and other rustlers, and Sperm Howard. Lee Chiswick enters, with his foreman, Dan Brand, and tells Sperm Howard of his orders to shoot rustlers at sight. Jeff Gray returns to Ruth and coldly reassures her of her father's safety. At supper, Ruth introduces Jeff to her father and Brand, and in Sanger's store later she speaks cordially to Curly Connor. Coming out of the store, they are greeted by sudden gunplay. Lee is wounded, and Jeff Gray appears with a smoking revolver. Two days later, Ruth tells her father of her projected elopement and her disillusionment. Later, Ruth meets Jeff Gray, whom she thinks tried to kill her father. When he tries to hold her bride, Ruth accidentally presses the trigger of her gun, and wounds Jeff. She takes him to Pat Sorley's camp.

CHAPTER IV—Continued

"Must I?" He grinned at her with cheerful effrontery. "Of course you must," Ruth almost stamped her foot in exasperation. "If you didn't do it, who did?" "I wouldn't know." She took that up triumphantly. "Neither you nor anybody else." "But I could guess." "Who, then?" she demanded. "If I ever mention it, probably it will be to the gent himself," he said softly. "I thought so." Gray turned to the line-rider. "Two shots were fired before Mr. Chiswick's friends took a hand. I fired the second. Point is, who cut loose with the first?" "If you weren't in it, why did you shoot at all?" Ruth asked. "I've asked myself that two-three times since," he replied suavely. "Plumb dumb of me. For 20 years I've been minding my own business exclusive, yet soon as I hit Tail Holt I butt into yours, not only once but se-ve-real times. I wouldn't know why, unless I've gone loco."

Ruth felt anger stir in her, but she kept it down. "If there's anything I can do for you while you're here—anything I can bring you," she said in a carefully even voice. "I'm going to see you again, am I? How nice! There are several things you can bring me. One is some tobacco. I'd like two-three books, and the latest newspaper you have. Also, bring Lee Chiswick. I want a powwow with him." "I'll send the books with my father," she said.

Lee Chiswick broke into his daughter's story excitedly. "He's hanging around waiting for a chance to dry-gulch me." Ruth shook her head. "I thought so at first. I don't now. Listen." "Lucky the wolf didn't do you a meanness when he had a chance." The strong jaw of the cattleman set. "I'll have him rounded up and rubbed out before he's 24 hours older."

"You won't need to round him up. I can tell you where he is. My story isn't finished. Do you want to hear it or not?" "Where is he?" demanded Chiswick. "He's at the rimrock line-camp, with a bullet-hole in his leg." "Did Pat get him?" "No. I did." "You what?" "I shot him." Her father stared at her with blank astonishment. "Good God, girl! What do you mean?" "I tried to pass him. He caught at the bridle rein. I don't know why. Perhaps he couldn't get out of the way and didn't want Blue Chip to



"What name shall I say?" asked Reynolds.

trample him down. Somehow my gun went off and hit him. I didn't want him to die before he could get help, so I took him to the camp." "Why didn't you come and get some of us?" he asked, his voice sharp with anxiety. "He might have shot you down on the way." "I was as safe with him as I would be with you, Father," she said. "He isn't that kind of man. I don't like him. He's . . . insulting. But he is not the kind of ruffian who would hurt a woman or would take advantage of a man in a fight. He didn't shoot you. Someone else did."

"That's crazy talk!" Lee shouted. "We saw him do it." "We thought we saw him do it," she corrected. "But we didn't. He saw someone fire at you and shot at the man. Then he ran forward to protect you, and we all thought he was the killer. Think it over, Father. From the position you were standing the bullet that creased you must have been fired in the alley, but this Gray came another direction."

"Got it all figured out, haven't you—with his help?" Lee said angrily. "If he had been the man, would he have run forward into the nest of us? It isn't reasonable. He was taken by surprise when Dan began shooting at him. I could see that. To save his life he had to get out." "What's he doing here, then?" "He wants to see you. I don't know what about. He insisted on my bringing you." "He'll see me, all right," the cattleman said, his voice harsh and grim. "My opinion is that he saved your life, after he had already taken care of me when a crazy man was on the shoot. Then I put a bullet in him, and now you want to finish him." Ruth spoke with sharp bitterness. "I'll listen to him," Lee told her. "I'll hear what he has got to say. Maybe you are right, but I don't believe it. If he comes clean and tells me what he is doing here—and if what he says satisfies me—

he'll be as safe with me as in God's pocket. I'll have him brought to the house and we'll take care of him here. But he can't pull the wool over my eyes. He has got to be straight goods." "That's fair," Ruth agreed. "I don't know anything about who he is. Maybe he's an outlaw on the dodge. He's as hard as iron and he may have gone bad. But there's something clean about him. He wouldn't shoot a man in the back. I'd stake everything I had on that." Chiswick nodded. "I would have said that myself, and I'm not often wrong about a man. When he ran at me with his gun smoking, I was sure surprised. Maybe you're right, daughter. He'll get a chance to tell his story."

"May I ride up to the line-camp with you?" Ruth asked. "No!" he exploded, and slammed a fist down on the breakfast-table to emphasize his decision. "You can't go with me. What's the matter with you, girl? You head for trouble like a thirsty steer for water. First, you run off with a no-count scalawag not worth a hill of beans, then you shoot another and tote him to hospital without asking me a by-your-leave. That's no way for a lady to do. No wonder folks think you're a wild young hellion. You are grown up now. You got to learn to act genteel."

"Would it be unladylike for me to go down with you and take some fried chicken and biscuits to a sick man?" she wanted to know. "You fix up this fried chicken and I'll take it down," Lee said firmly. "I aim to be reasonable, but I'm through letting you behave so crazy." Ruth gave up. She packed the tobacco, the books, and the food. For Pat she put in a corn-cob pipe to replace the broken clay one. Knowing her father's impulsive nature, she was full of misgivings. Over his shoulder, as he started, he called back a word of reassurance. "Don't you worry, daughter. I'm not going off half-cocked. If this Gray can show me he's not a yellow coyote, I'll not harm him."

In a natural meadow half a mile from the house, he stopped to give Dan Brand instructions about the drive of yearlings sold to Broderick. This done, he told his son Frank and the foreman what he had just learned from Ruth. Frank asked to ride with him to Sorley's camp. The Chiswicks rode up to the rimrock and skirted the edge of it until they reached a break. Through this they climbed to the lip of the park where the line-camp lay.

From the chimney of the cabin a thin trickle of smoke drifted. "Pat is probably line-riding and has left this fellow alone," Frank said. As they drew closer, Lee hulled the house. From the boulder field back of it an echo came back to them. No other answer sounded. A second time he shouted, still without response.

"Get your gun out, boy," he ordered grimly. "I don't like this." He swung from the saddle and drew the rifle attached to it. Frank dismounted hurriedly, his horse between him and the house. "I sure don't want to get blasted out of my saddle," he said. The two men worked toward the cabin, using their horses to screen them as much as possible from any sharpshooters who might be in the building or among the rocks above. Nobody stirred except themselves. Frank felt a strange prickling sensation run up and down his spine. Any moment there might come a crash of guns. Lee maneuvered close to the door, then made a bolt for it. His son was inside scarce a second later. The cabin was empty.

"Where's the fellow gone?" Lee asked. "I reckon he wasn't as bad hurt as he was making out," Frank said. "What's this?" Lee picked a piece of wrapping-paper from the table. He read aloud something that had been scrawled on it with a pencil. "Much obliged, Doc, for fixing my leg. See you later maybe."

Jeff Gray rode into Tail Holt two days after leaving the rimrock line-camp. His broad shoulders sagged with weariness. The eyes of the man were sunken. The lean face was haggard and unshaven. At the Alamo corral he dismounted stiffly. The owner of the place, Jim Reynolds, squinted an unspoken question at him from under slanted eyebrows. There was an arresting quality about Gray that held attention. The fatigue, the stains of travel, did not conceal his dominant force. He unsaddled the sweat-streaked roan gelding with a competent economy of motion. When he moved, a pantherish ripple ran wavelike through his well-packed muscles.

"Fore bronc some gaunted," Reynolds said. "Some," Gray agreed. He watered and fed the animal himself. Reynolds watched him, observing that he knew how to treat a hot, tired horse. The corral-owner wondered who this stranger was. "I'll put up at Ma Presnall's if she has room for me," Gray said. "Could you send word to Sperm Howard that I'm there and want to see him?" "What name shall I say?" asked Reynolds. "Jeff Gray. I'm obliged, sir."

Gray limped up the street toward the boarding-house. Ma Presnall had her muscular arms bare to the elbows. There was a splash of flour on one temple. She had been baking. Her face was leathery and wrinkled, the challenge of her washed-out eyes direct and hard. For twenty years she had lived in frontier camps and held her own. He could have a room and board, she said, for a dollar a day or five dollars a week. Strangers paid in advance. A five-dollar bill passed from Gray to her and she led him to his room.

After washing the caked dust from face and hands, he lay down on the bed. The wound in his leg was throbbing. For the better part of sixty hours he had been in the saddle and he was almost worn out. When the opportunity came he would bathe and dress the hurt. Just now he had not time. He was expecting a visit from Sherman Howard and perhaps from others. It was unfortunate that his entry into Tail Holt had been so melodramatic. Probably he would have to light out again, if they gave him a chance to go.

With his pocket-knife he ripped open the lining of his vest and drew out a folded paper. He expected to need it shortly. The paper was a printed poster offering a reward of 2,000 for the capture of Clint Duke, the leader of a band of outlaws who had held up and robbed the Texas and Southern Flyer. A description of the desperado was given. With it was a picture taken from a cut. The face that looked back from the poster at Jeff Gray was his own. Through the door Ma Presnall called information. "Some gents to see you." "Who are they?" Gray asked, putting the paper in his vest pocket. "Sperm Howard, Curly Connor, and Morg Norris." There was a barely perceptible pause before Gray said, "Ask them to come up, Mrs. Presnall, if you will." (TO BE CONTINUED)

Cross Wheat and Couch Grass to Halt Shifting of the Farm Soil in Canada

In some parts of Canada a serious problem has been confronting farmers for many years now—one with which no English farmer is likely to be faced. Their farms won't stay put. On the wide prairies of North America acres of loose soil shift each year, through the action of wind and rain. Up to the present there has been nothing to prevent it. Farmers simply had to sit and watch the fertile top soil wash away in the heavy rains of the spring and autumn, and blow away when, in the summer, the burning sun dried it up into fine dust. Thus, every year, says a writer in London Answers Magazine, the land was impoverished, and no amount of manuring or careful cultivation on the part of the farmer served him in what seemed to be a hopeless battle against Nature. In the last year or two the trouble has been intensified, and considerable tracts of land have been laid waste. But the scientist can sometimes

find a weapon which will turn defeat into victory, and the Biological Institute of Svalof, South Sweden, hopes before long to put a stop to this constant disappearance of valuable soil. They are crossing wheat with the farmers' old enemy, couch grass, and they have every reason to hope that the result will be a useful crop of grain, provided by a plant whose clinging roots will bind together the shifting soil. Canadian farmers will have much to thank the scientists for when they plant this grain, and another on which the scientists are working now. The latter is a cross between wheat and rye, which, it is hoped, will be capable of withstanding the bitter cold of the long northern winters, and of producing a useful crop at the same time. The Canadian farmers' continued prosperity depends on some such type of grain. At present the yield is too small to be useful, but in the future, no doubt, it will be a standard crop.

Light-Hearted Fashions For a Gay Vacation!

THE approach of summer makes us all long to get into bright, easy, carefree clothes, even if we're planning to vacation at home, with occasional weekends at the lake or seaside. These



two patterns bring you styles that are a joy to wear and a joy to make. The patterns are easy to follow and each includes a detailed sew chart. Slacks With Bolero and Topper. The slacks fit so nicely about the hips, and have the proper width in the trousers. They and the bolero both tailor quickly and easily in denim, gingham, seersucker or jersey. Use a brilliant handkerchief print for the topper—any sturdy cotton. Here's a holiday outfit you'll thoroughly enjoy. The Adorable Dirndl. Nothing is more popular, because nothing is more becoming to slim young figures. It's such a gay, easy-to-wear fashion, and the square neckline is flattering. For a dirndl, choose something in a lively print—linen, chintz and percale are best. Be sure the colors are as complimentary to your skin as are complimentary to your figure!

The Patterns. 1332 is designed for sizes 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20. Size 14 requires 3 3/4 yards of 39-inch material for the bolero and slacks; 3/4 yard for the topper. 1480 is designed for sizes 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20. Size 14 requires 3 3/4 yards of 35-inch material, plus 3/4 yards of braid for trimming and 1 1/2 yards ribbon for belt. Spring-Summer Pattern Book. Send 15 cents for the Barbara Bell Spring and Summer Pattern Book which is now ready. It contains 109 attractive, practical and becoming designs. The Barbara Bell patterns are well planned, accurately cut and easy to follow. Each pattern includes a sew-chart which enables even a beginner to cut and make her own clothes. Send your order to The Sewing Circle Pattern Dept., 149 New Montgomery Ave., San Francisco, Calif. Patterns 15 cents (in coins) each. © Bell Syndicate.—WNU Service.

Ask Me Another A General Quiz

- 1. When did Cordell Hull act as President of the United States?
2. What besides "heads" and "tails" are the two sides of a coin or metal?
3. What area is included in continental United States?
4. What is the zenith?
5. What is the average length of a session of congress?
6. What three important materials are used to make pig iron?

- The Answers
1. In August, 1935, Roosevelt was on a cruise 2,000 miles away, and Garner was in Japan. Hull was then Chief Executive.
2. Obverse and reverse.
3. By custom and usage it includes only the 48 states and the District of Columbia. Strictly, however, it should also include Alaska.
4. The point in the heavens exactly overhead.
5. In the last fifty years the average session of congress has been 197 days.
6. Iron ore, coke and limestone are used to make pig iron.

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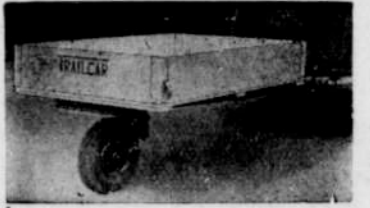
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