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By Freeman Harding.

CRASH! went an overturned table, two revolver shots ran out as one and the bar-room of the Colonial Hotel was instantly in a state of turmoil. In the excitement which followed, drinks, faro table and card game were deserted while the motley crowd of cow-punchers, construction workers, land seekers and hangers on pressed about the corner where a still form lay face downward amongst the scattered cards and chips. Only those who were nearest could see that the dead man was Harry Rawlins, one of the most widely known and most popular ranchers in the upper country, but none save those who had been playing at the table where the fatal quarrel broke out knew what had happened or who to blame. More than that none had seen the tense faced man who was responsible for the killing slip quietly around the crowd and out through a doorway which led to other parts of the house. The affray was so sudden, the result so uncommon and the excitement so intense that Ralph Cousins, gambler and gunman, had disappeared before it was realized that a man had been shot in a country where gunmen and their handiwork were frowned down upon both by the law and custom.

In the early eighties Kamloops was the supply point for the "dry Belt" and the time honoured somnolence of the cattle country was stirred in the wakening which came from the approach of the bands of steel stretching slowly through the defiles of the mountains which shut out on either side the sun-kissed valleys and the bunch grass ranges of the interior from the world which lay beyond the grim grey rocks. At that time the cattlemen who had become part and parcel of the country felt their long deferred hope crystalize into certainty under the movements of survey and construction gangs, and foreboded evil days for their industry from the influx of land-seekers, and prospectors spying out the country

to be traversed by the far-reaching rails. With the construction gangs, the land-seekers and prospectors, had come the miscellaneous horde of camp followers which ever abides on the line of march of the army of development.

Kamloops naturally had attracted many of these camp followers and while gambling rows of a more or less serious nature were every-day events, gun play and killings therefrom were unheard of. As a consequence the crowd in the Colonial bar, reckless members of "the legion that never was listed," as most of them were, was stunned for a moment by the work of the gambler who had taken so prompt an advantage of the confusion to make good his escape.

When strong hands raised the stricken form of the young ranchman and brought into view the bronzed face now still and grey in death, streaked with a dull red stain which crept slowly from a smoke-blackened hole in the white forehead, a groan, more of a curse than a groan, burst from fifty throats and stirred the crowd into action.

For a moment some of the excited men turned their attention to an old man who stood near the over-turned table still fingering the trigger of a heavy Colt's. He had been in the game, they knew, and this fact, coupled with the presence of the business-like looking weapon in his hands, directed suspicion to him. The suspicion only lasted a moment, for old Dad Thompson was known to every cattleman in the room and was soon surrounded by eager questioners, the coolest of whom learned from the hard-bitten old frontiersman the truth of the affair. Within a very few minutes half a hundred men were seaching house and town and river front for Ralph Cousins, gambler, gunman and murderer.

As Cousins slipped out of the brightly lighted bar-room into the dark hallway beyond the door he collided with a girl who had looked through the partly open-