

4 Trails to Two Moons

— and with hot lead whimpering low, while behind the cut bank of yonder coulee picked marksmen of Zang Whistler's gang were coolly engaging to kill while their comrades ran off the stolen stock.

Original Bill's life was one of variety; it was ebullient and replete with unpremeditated climaxes. Withal, the life of his choosing.

He was of the cattle clan, — born to it in that day when every youth in Texas looked forward to riding the trail with the longhorns, just as the Gloucester and New Bedford boy of the heroic age of sail looked through schoolhouse windows to high harbor spars. The chivalry of the cattle clan had been bred in him by long hours on night herd, by the harrowing moments of stampede in a thunderstorm, the rollicking fellowship of the round-up.

Puncher, trail boss, outfit boss and owner; all four grades of the cattle clan's hierarchy had he passed; its wild, free code was his accolade. In this evil day when barbed wire crept across the free range and a meaner race of sheep herders and their voracious bands was come to dispute with his own people right to what had always been theirs by preëmption, Original Bill Blunt took his place on the cov-