

THEM WEEDS

ell Considering En-law Making Prop-Owners Liable

LAIN NUISANCE

self Responsible for ce of all Boulevards and Streets

may fall for drought 1921, in the whole out the private lot but thistles and every obnoxious thing least one hundred

are daily making of the abundance of unused land, the seed weeds blowing across and lawns with disqui- The Council had deration the passage enforcing the cut-eds by property own-er land.

of boulevards on unpaved streets is problems which the il is soon to take up. ng of the grass and weeds on the streets of the city, although ens keep the boulev-ers of their proper-conditions. Others sably bad, it was t.

ck Holmes said today boulevards were under of the city.

MARKERS BIGGER

ers Easier to Identify Year, 'Tis Said

Aug. 4.—Ontario's 1922 markers will be manufac-ronito, Macdonald & Co. awarded the contract on of 14 cents per pair. The y markers were made in y—the Canadian Color-ers, ten tenders, rang-ents, the lowest, to 23¢ highest. Three of them American concerns. 1922 markers should e heart of the "speed om to that of the per-omobile speeders. Jet gures, an inch larger on the 1921 markers, a background of pure effort was bent toward pattern and color scheme give the greatest visi-

FREIGHT RATES

ard Will Take Steps to Present Tariff

AL, Aug. 4.—That the alway Commissioners of in the near future take ue the freight rates on allways, was the an- contained in a letter re- e local Board of Trade Hon. F. B. Carvell, the sionner. The Montreal ade recently addressed a reduction in railway commensurate with the cut in wages now in

TIME AT MADOC

l garden party was held irection of the Catholic ties at Madoc, last even-ber of people were pres-veville and towns and vil- s vicinity. Rev. Father in charge of the proceed-

CHAPTER XXXVII

Shorty Asks a Question

When Shorty separated from Doble in Frio Canon he rode inconspicuously to a tenejon where he could be snugly hidden from the public gaze and yet meet a few "pals," whom he could trust at least as long as he could keep his eyes on them. His intention was to have a good time in the only way he knew how. Another purpose was coupled with this; he was not going to drink enough to interfere with reasonable caution.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Dug Doble Rides Into The Hills

The booming of the guns died down. The arid smoke that filled the room lifted to shredded shreds. A man's deep breathing was the only sound in the heavy darkness. Presently came a soft football of some one moving cautiously. A match flared. A hand cupped the flame for an instant to steady it before the match moved toward the wick of a kerosene lamp. Dug Doble's first thought was for his own safety. The house door was closed, the window blinds were down. He had heard the beat of hoots die away on the road. But he did not intend to be caught by a trick. He stepped forward, locked the door, and made sure the blinds were offering no cracks of light. Satisfied that all was well, he turned to the figure sprawled on the floor with outstung arms. "Dead as a stuck pig," he said callously after he had turned the body over. "Got him plumb through the forehead—in the dark, too. Some shootin', Shorty."

CUNSIGHT PASS

"I reckon I'm a bad citizen, sir, but I hope he makes his getaway before Applegate shows up."

"Well, he's one tough scallawag, but I don't aim to give him away right now. Shorty is a whole lot better proposition than Dug Doble."

Dave came back to the order of the day. "What do you want me to do now?"

The cattleman looked him over. "You damaged much?"

"No."

"Burnt in the shoulder, I see? Won't keep me from swinging a sock and bossing a gang?"

"Wore out, I reckon?"

"I feel fine since breakfast—took two cups of strong coffee."

Again Crawford's eyes traveled over his ally. They saw a ragged, red-eyed tramp, face and hands and arms blackened with char and grimed with smoke. Outside, he was such a specimen of humanity as the police would have arrested promptly on suspicion. But the shrewd eyes of the cattleman saw more—a spirit indomitable that would drive the weary, tormented body till it dropped in its tracks, a quality of leadership that was a trumpet call to the men who served with him, a soul master of its intimacies. His heart went out to the young fellow. Wherefore he grinned and gave him another job. Strong men today were at a premium with Emerson Crawford.

"Ride over and see how Bob's comin' out. We'll make it here."

Sanders swung to the saddle and moved forward to the next fire front, the one between Cattle and San Jacinto Canons. Hart himself was not there. There had come a call for help from the man in charge of the gang trying to hold the fire in San Jacinto. He had answered that summons long before daybreak and had not yet returned.

The situation on the Cattle-San Jacinto front was not encouraging. The distance to be protected was nearly a mile. Part of the way was along a ridge fairly easy to defend, but a good deal of it lay in lower land of timber and heavy brush.

Dave rode along the front, studying the contour of the country and the chance of defending it. His judgment was that it could not be done with the men on hand. He was not sure that the line could be held even with reinforcements. But there was nothing for it but to try. He sent a man to Crawford, urging him to get help to him as soon as possible.

Then he took command of the crew already in the field, rearranging the men so as to put the larger part of his force in the most dangerous locality, and in default of a sack seized a spreading branch as a flail to beat out fire in the high grass close to San Jacinto.

An hour later half a dozen stragglers were reported for duty. Shorty was one of them.

"The ol' man can't spare any more," the rustler explained. "He had to hustle Steve and his gans out their blankets to go help Bob Hart. They say Hart's in a heluva bad way. The fire's jumped the trail-creek and is spreading over the country. He's rannin' another trail further back."

It occurred to Dave that if the wind changed suddenly and heightened, it would sweep a back-fire round him and out off the retreat of his crew. He sent a weary lad back to keep watch on it and report any change of direction in that vicinity.

After which he forgot all about chances of danger from the rear. His hands and mind were more than busy trying to drive back the snarling, ravenous beast in front of him. He might have found time to take other precautions if he had known that the exhausted boy sent to watch against a back-fire had, with the coming of night, fallen asleep in a draw.

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He stood looking down at the face of the man whose brain had spun so many cobwebs of deceit and treachery. Even in death it had none of that dignity which sometimes is lent to those whose lives have been full of meanness and guile. But though Doble looked at his late ally, he was not thinking about him. He was mapping out his future course of action.

If any one had heard the shots and been found here now, no fury on earth could be convinced that he had not killed Steelman. His six-shooter still gave forth a faint trickle of smoke. An examination would show that three shots had been fired from it.

"Where's Dug?" asked Shorty bluntly.

"Why, Dug—why, he's here, Shorty. Didn't know it was you. Lowed it might be some one else. So he stepped into another room."

The short cowpuncher walked in and closed the door behind him. He stood with his back to it, facing the other door of the room.

"Did you hire Dug to fire the chaparral?" he asked, his voice ominously quiet.

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"I dunno what you men," he quavered. "I'll call Dug if you want to see him." He began to shuffle toward the inner room.

"Hold yore hawsses, Brad. I asked you a question."

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fire spent itself for lack of fuel. Crawford had posted a rider to town calling for more man power to build trails and wield flails. This was the sum of the news. It was not strictly accurate, but it served to rouse Shorty at once.

He rose and touched the Mexican on the arm. "Where did you say that fire started, Pedro?"

"Bear Canon, señor."

"And it's crossed San Jacinto?"

"Like wildfire. The slim vaquero made a gesture all in-clusive. "Nt runs, señor, like a frightened jack-rabbit. Nothing will stop it—nothing. It is sent by heaven for a punishment."

"Hmp!" Shorty grunted.

The rustler fell into a somber silence. He drank no more. The dark-lashed eyes of the Mexican gazed sullenly at the table in front of him. A problem had pushed itself into his consciousness, one he could not burn ash or ignore.

If the fire had started back of Bear Canon, what agency has set it going? He and Doble had camped last night at that very spot. If there had been a fire there during the night he must have known it. Then when had it fire started? And how? They had seen to faint smoke of it as they rode away, the filmy smoke of a young fire not yet under much headway. Was it reasonable to suppose that some one else had been camping close to them? This was possible, but not likely. For they would probably have seen signs of the other evening camp-fire.

Eliminating this possibility, there remained—Dug Doble. Had Dug fired the brush while his companion was saddling for the start? The more Shorty considered this possibility, the greater force it acquired in his mind. Dug's hatred of Crawford, Hart, and especially Sanders would be satiated in part at least if he could wipe their oil bonanza from the map. The wind had been right. Doble was no fool. He knew that if the fire ran wild in the chaparral only a miracle could save the Jackpot reservoirs and plant from destruction.

Other evidence accumulated. Cryptic remarks of Doble made during the day. His anxiety to see Steelman immediately. A certain manner of ill-repressed triumph whenever he mentioned Sanders or Crawford. These bolstered Shorty's growing opinion that the man had deliberately fired the chaparral from a spirit of revenge.

Shorty was an outlaw and a bad man. He had killed, and might at any time kill again. To save the Jackpot from destruction he would not have made a turn of the hand. But Shorty was a cattleman. He had been brought up in the saddle and had known the whine of the lariat and the dust of the drag drive all his days. Every man has his code.

Three things stood out in that of Shorty. He was loyal to the hand that paid him, he stood by his pals, and he believed in and after his own fashioned loved cattle and the life of which they were the central fact. To destroy the range feed wantonly was a crime so nefarious that he could not believe Doble guilty of it. And yet—

He could not let the matter lie in thought. He had left it nd-tte thought. He had left the tenejon and rode to Steelman's house. Before entering he examined carefully both of his long-barreled forty-fives. He made sure that the six-shooters were in perfect order and that they rested free in the holsters. That sixth sense acquired by "bad men," by means of which they sniff danger when it is close, was telling him that smoke would rise before he left the house.

He stepped to the porch and knocked. There came a moment's silence, a low-pitched murmur of whispering voices carried through an open window, the shuffling of feet. The door was opened by Brad Steelman. He was alone in the room.

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the range?"

"You know I wouldn't do that," the older man whined. "I got sheep ain't I? Wouldn't be reasonable I'd destroy their feed. No, you got a wrong notion about—"

"Yore sheep ain't on the south slope range." Shorty's mind had moved forward one notch toward certainty. Steelman's manner was that of man dodging the issue. It carried no conviction of innocence. "How much you payin' him?"

The door of the inner room opened. Dug Doble's big frame filled the entrance. The eyes of the two gunmen searched each other. Those of Doble asked a question. Had it come to a showdown? Steelman sidled over to the desk where he worked and sat down in front of it. His right hand dropped into an open drawer, apparently carelessly and without intent.

Shorty knew at once that Doble had been drinking heavily. The man was morose and sullen. His color was high. Plainly he was primed for a killing if trouble came.

"Lookin' for me, Shorty?" he asked.

"You fired e'ar Canon," charged the cowpuncher.

"So?"

"When I went to saddle."

Doble's eyes narrowed. "You ain't to run my business, Shorty?"

Neither man lifted his gaze from the other. Each knew that the test had come once more. They were both men who had "gone bad," in the current phrase of the community. Both had killed. Both searched now for an advantage in that steady duel of the eyes. Neither had any fear of the emotions that dominated were cold rage and caution. Every sense and nerve in each focussed to one purpose—to kill without being killed.

"When yore's a mine, Dug."

"Is this yore's?"

"Sure is. I've stood for a heap from you. I've let you ugly temper ride me. When you killed Tim Har- rigan you got me in bad. Not the first time either. But I'm damned if I'll ride with a coyote low-down enough to burn the range."

"No?"

From the desk came the sharp angry bark of a revolver. Shorty felt his hat lift as a bullet tore through the rim. His eyes swept to Steelman, who had been a negligible factor in his calculations. The man fired again, and blew out the light in the darkness. Shorty swept out both guns and fired. His first two shots were directed toward the man behind the desk, the next two at the spot where Doble had been standing. Another gun was booming in the room, perhaps two. Yellow fire flashes ripped the blackness.

Shorty whipped open the door at his back, slid through it, and kicked it shut with his foot as he leaped from the porch. At the same moment he thought he heard a groan.

Swiftly he ran to the cottonwood where he had left his horse tied. He jerked loose the knot, swung to the saddle, and galloped out of town.

The drumming of hoots came down the wind to a young fellow returning from a late call on his sweetheart. He wondered who was in such a hurry.

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He must get away from the place at once.

Doble poured himself a drink of tumbler of whiskey and drank it neat. Yes, he must go, but he might as well take with him any money Steelman had in the safe. The dead man owed him a thousand dollars he would never be able to collect in any other way.

He stooped and examined the pockets of the still figure. A bunch of keys rewarded him. An old-fashioned safe stood in the corner back of the desk. Doble stooped in front of it, then waited for an instant to make sure nobody was coming. He fell to work, trying the keys one after another.

A key fitted. He turned it and swung open the door. The killer drew out bundles of papers and glanced through them hurriedly. Deeds, mortgages, oil stocks, old receipts; he wanted none of these, and tossed them to the floor as soon as he discovered there was no bank-notes among them. Compartment after compartment he rifled. Behind a package of abstracts he found a bunch of greenbacks tied together by a rubber band at each end. The first bill showed that the denomination was fifty dollars. Doble investigated no farther. He thrust the bulky package into his inside coat pocket and rose.

Again he listened. No sound broke the stillness of the night. The silence got on his nerves. He took another big drink and decided it was time to go.

He blew out the light and once more listened. The lifeless body of his ally lying within touch of his foot did not disturb the outlaw. He had not killed him, and if he had it would have made no difference. Very softly for a large man, he passed to the inner room and toward the back door. He deflected his course to a cupboard where he knew Steelman kept liquor and from a shelf helped himself to an unbroken quart bottle of bourbon. He knew himself well enough to know that during the next twenty-four hours he would want whiskey badly.

Slowly he unlocked and opened the back door. His eyes searched the yard and the open beyond to make sure that neither his enemy nor a sheriff's posse was lurking in the brush for him. He crept out to the stable, revolver in hand. Here he saddled in the dark, deftly and rapidly, thrusting the bottle of whiskey into one of the pockets of the saddlebags. Leading the horse out to the mesquite, he swung to the saddle and rode away.

He was still in the saddle when the peaks above caught the morning sun low in a shaft of golden light. Far up in the gulches the new fallen snow reflected the dawn's pink.

In a pocket of the hills Doble unsaddled. He hobbled his horse and turned it loose to graze while he lay down under a pine with the bottle for a companion.

The man had always had a difficult temper. This had grown on him and had been responsible largely for his decline in life. It had been no part of his plan to "go bad." There had been a time when he had been headed for success in the community. He had held men's respect, even though they had not liked him. Then somehow, he had turned the wrong corner and been unable to retrace his steps.

He could even put a finger on the time he had commenced to slip. It had begun when he had quarreled with Emerson Crawford about his daughter Joyce. Shorty and he had done some brand-burning through a wet blanket. But he had not gone so far that a return to respectability was impossible. A little rustling on the quiet, with no evidence to fasten it on, was nothing to bar a man from society. He had gone more definitely wrong after Sanders came back to Malapi. The young ex-convict, he chose to think, was responsible for the circumstances that made of him an outlaw. Crawford and Sanders together had exposed him and driven him from the haunts of men to the hills. He hated them both with a bitter, morose virulence his soul could not escape.

Throughout the day he continued to drink. This gave him no refuge from himself. He still brooded in the inferno of his own thought-circle. It is possible that a touch of madness had begun to affect his brain. Certainly his subsequent actions would seem to bear out this theory.

Revenge! The thought of it spurred him every waking hour, roving his wounded pride cruelly. There was a way within reach of his hand, one suggested by Steelman's whisperings though never openly advocated by the shepherd. The jealousy of the man urged him to it, and his consuming vanity persuaded him that out of evil might come good. He could make the girl love him. So her punishment would bring her joy in the end. As for Crawford and Sanders, his success would be such bitter medicine to them that time

would never wear away the taste of it.

At dusk he rose and resaddled. Under the stars he rode back to Malapi. He knew exactly what he meant to do and how he meant to do it.

CHAPTER XXXIX The Tunnel

Dave knew no rest that night. He patrolled his line from San Jacinto to Cattle and back again, stopping at ways to lend a hand where the attack was most furious. The men of his crew were weary to exhaustion, but the pressure of the fire was so great that they dared not leave the front. As soon as one blaze was beaten out, another started. A shower of sparks close to Cattle Canon swept over the ridge and set the thick grass afire. This was smothered with saddle blankets and with sand and dirt thrown from shovels.

Nearer to San Jacinto Canon the danger was more acute. Dave did not dare back-fire on account of the wind. He dynamited the timber to make a trail-break against the howling, roaring wall of fire plunging forward.

As soon as the flames seized the timber the heat grew more intense. The sound of falling trees as they crashed down marked the progress of the fire. The men retreated, staggering with exhaustion, hands and faces flayed, eyes inflamed and blinded by the black smoke that rolled over them.

A stiff wind was blowing, but it was no longer a steady one. Sometimes it bore from the northeast; again in a cross-current almost directly from the east. The smoke poured in, swirling round them till they scarce knew one direction from another.

The dense cloud lifted for a moment, swept away by an air current. To the fire-fighters that glimpse of the landscape told an appalling fact. The demon had escaped below from San Jacinto Canon and been swept westward by a slant of wind with the speed of an express train. They were trapped by the back-fire in a labyrinth from which there appeared no escape. Every path of exit was blocked. The flames had leaped from hilltop to hilltop.

The men gathered together to consult. Many of them were on the verge of panic.

Dave spoke quietly. "We've got a chance if we keep our heads. There's an old mining tunnel hereabouts. Follow me, and stay together."

He plunged into the heavy smoke that had fallen about them again, working his way by instinct rather than by sight. Twice he stopped, to make sure that his men were all at heel. Several times he left them, diving into the smoke to determine which way they must go.

The dry, salt crackle of a dead pine close at hand would have told him, even if the oppressive heat had not, that the fire would presently sweep over the ground where they stood. He drew the men steadily toward Cattle Canon.

In that furious, murk-filled world he could not be sure he was moving in the right direction, though the slope of the ground led him to think so. Falling trees crashed about them. The men staggered on in the uncanny light which tinged even the smoke.

Dave stopped and gave sharp, crisp orders. His voice was even and steady. "Must be close to it now. Lie back of these down trees with your faces close to the ground. I'll be back in a minute. Shorty, you're boss of the crew while I'm away."

"You're gonna leave us to roast," a man accused, in a voice that was half a scream.

Sanders did not stop to answer him, but Shorty took the hysterical man in hand. "GH tore a hole in you. Ain't you got sense enough to see he'll save us if there's a chance?"

The man fell trembling to the ground.

"Two men behind each log," ordered Shorty. "If yore clothes git afire, help each other put it out."

They lay down and waited while the fire swept above and around them. Fortunately the woods here were not dense. Men prayed or cursed or wept, according to their natures. The logs in front of some of them caught fire and spread to their clothing. Shorty's voice encouraged them. "Stick to it, boys. He'll be back if he's alive."

It could have been only ten minutes, but it seemed hours before Sanders' voice rang out above the fury of the blast.

"All up! I've found the tunnel! Step lively now!"

They staggered after their leader, Shorty bringing up the rear to see that none collapsed by the way. The line moved drunkenly forward, now and again a man went down, overcome by the smoke and heat. With brutal kicks Shorty drove him to his feet again.

The tunnel was a shallow one in a hillside. Dave stood aside and

counted the men as they passed in. Two were missing. He ran along the back trail, dense with smoke from the approaching flames, and stumbled into a man. It was Shorty. He was dragging with him the body of a man who had fainted. Sanders seized an arm and together they managed to get the unconscious victim to the tunnel.

Dave was the last man in. He learned from the man in the rear that the tunnel had no drift. The floor was moist and there was a small seepage spring in it near the entrance.

Some of the men protested at staying.

"The fire'll lick in and burn us out like rats," one man urged. "This ain't no protection. We've just walked into a trap. I'll take my chance outside."

Dave reached forward and lifted one of Shorty's guns from its holster. "You'll stay right here, Dillon. We didn't make it one minute too soon. The whole hill out there's roaring."

"I'll take my chance out there. That's my lookout," said the man, moving toward the entrance.

"No. You'll stay here." Dave's hard, chill gaze swept over his crew. Several of them were backing Dillon and others were wavering. It is your only chance, and I'm here to see you take it. Don't take another step."

Dillon took one, and went crumpling to the granite floor before Dave could move. Shorty had knocked him down with the butt of his nine-inch-barrel revolver.

Already smoke was filling the cave. The fire had raced to its mouth and was licking in with long, red, hungry tongues. The tunnel timbers were smouldering.

"Lie down and breathe