

# The Cashel Case

By CST. T. E. G. SHAW

WHEN the name Ernest Cashel is mentioned, anyone who has heard of it immediately associates it with the man convicted of murder, who, five days before he was scheduled to be hanged, escaped from the NWMP guard-room at Calgary, N.W.T., on Dec. 10, 1903, and remained at large for 46 days. At the time, these exploits of Cashel received such prominence that despite the fact he was re-apprehended on a Sunday, Calgary publications found it newsworthy enough to bring out extras. And of course, in the intervening 56 years, the affair has been brought back to life through numerous newspaper and magazine articles.

Probably the least known aspects of Cashel's "career" are the events leading up to his being charged with, and subsequently convicted of murder.

Roughly 22 when he came to the Calgary area from Buffalo, Wyoming, Cashel was arrested by Calgary City Police on a charge of forgery, but managed to escape custody on Oct. 14, 1902. North-West Mounted Police detachments throughout what was to become the Province of Alberta three years later were notified, but it was eight days before any word was received of his whereabouts, and then only an indication of the direction he had travelled from Calgary. On October 22 he stole a bay pony near Lacombe, about 105 miles north of Calgary.

Almost another month passed before anything definite was uncovered. On November 19, D. A. Thomas of Pleasant Valley reported the somewhat mysterious disappearance of his brother-in-law, I. Rufus Belt, from a ranch 38 miles east of Lacombe in the Red Deer River country. Looking into this matter, a Mounted

Police constable discovered that when Belt was last seen on November 1, a man in his early twenties known as Bert Elseworth had been bunking with him. And from the description supplied, there was no doubt that Elseworth was Ernest Cashel. The policeman found that Belt's saddle with his name inscribed, his horse, clothing, shot-gun and money including a \$50 gold certificate were also missing.

As it was feared that Belt had met with foul play, Supt. G. E. Sanders, who commanded the NWMP's "E" Division at Calgary, assigned Cst. Alick Pennycuick, ace investigator, to the case, and all posts were alerted to prevent Cashel from returning to the United States. And as usual in this type of an investigation, innumerable reports were turned in from people who had "seen" Cashel. One of these took Constable Pennycuick as far away as Prineville, Oregon, south-east of Portland.

Eight days before Christmas, a man answering Cashel's description rode into Shepard, a few miles east of Calgary, on a played-out horse, flagged the west-bound train, and got on board with his saddle. He bought a ticket to Calgary, but stayed on the train through to Vancouver. Following the trail, the Mounted Policeman discovered the man had used at least two different names at the coastal city, and things began to look rosy. However, in Prineville, Constable Pennycuick discovered to his dismay that he had been following a distraught cowboy whose only troubles were of the feminine variety while on the Prairies.

Despite this setback, Cashel's freedom—at this time—was becoming limited. On Jan. 17, 1903, Glen Healy of Jumping Pound, west of Calgary, advised police he had lent a horse to a man by the name