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## Tangled Trails

—BY WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE

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### CHAPTER X.

#### KIRBY ASKS A DIRECT QUESTION.

The story of the Cunningham mystery, as it was already being called, filled the early editions of the afternoon papers. The "Times" had the scoop of the day. It was a story signed by Chuck Ellis, who had seen the alleged murderer climb down by a fire escape from the window of Cunningham's bedroom and had actually talked with the man as he emerged from the alley. His description of the suspect tallied fairly closely with that of Mrs. Hull, but it corrected errors in regard to weight, age, and color of clothes.

As Kirby walked to the Equitable Building to keep his appointment with his cousins, it would not have surprised him if at any moment an officer had touched him on the shoulder and told him he was under arrest.

Entering the office of the oil broker, where the two brothers were waiting for him, Kirby had a sense of an interrupted conversation. They had been talking about him, he guessed. The atmosphere was electric.

James spoke quickly, to bridge any embarrassment. "This is a dreadful thing about Uncle James. I've never been so shocked before in my life. The crime was absolutely fiendish."

Kirby nodded. "Or else the deed of some insane person. Men in their right senses don't do such things."

"No," agreed James. "Murder's one thing. Such coldblooded devilry is quite another. There may be insanity connected with it. But one thing is sure. I'll not rest till the villain's run to earth and punished."

His eyes met those of his cousin. They were cold and bleak.

"Do you think I did it?" asked Kirby quietly.

The directness of the question took James aback. After the fraction of a second's hesitation he spoke. "If I did I wouldn't be going to lunch with you."

Jack cut in. Excitement had banished his usual almost insolent indolence. His dark eyes burned with a consuming fire. "Let's put our cards on the table. We think you're the man the police are looking for—the one described in the papers."

"What makes you think that?"

"You told us you were going to see him as soon as he got back from the Springs. The description fits you to a T. You can't get away with an alibi so far as I'm concerned."

"All right," said the rough rider,

his low, even voice unruffled by excitement. "If I can't, I can't. We'll say I'm the man who came down the fire escape. What then?"

James was watching his cousin steadily. The pupils of his eyes narrowed. He took the answer out of his brother's mouth. "Then we think you probably know something about this mystery that you'll want to tell us. You must have been on the spot very soon after the murderer escaped. Perhaps you saw him."

Kirby told the story of his night's adventure, omitting any reference whatever to Wild Rose or to anybody else in the apartment when he entered.

After he had finished, James made his comment. "You've been very frank, Kirby. I accept your story. A guilty man would have denied being in the apartment, or he would have left town and disappeared."

The range rider smiled sardonically. "I'm not so sure of that. You've got the goods on me. I can't deny I'm the man the police are lookin' for. Mrs. Hull would identify me. So would this reporter Ellis. All you would have to do would be to hand my name to the nearest officer. An' I can't run away without confessin' guilt. Even if I had killed Uncle James, I couldn't do much except tell some story like the one I've told you."

"It wouldn't go far in a courtroom," Jack said.

"Not far," admitted Kirby. "By the way, you haven't expressed an opinion, Jack. Do you think I shot Uncle James?"

Jack looked at him, almost sullenly, and looked away. He poked at the corner of the desk with the ferrule of his cane. "I don't know who shot him. You had quarreled with him, and you went to have another row with him. A cop told me that some one who knew how to tie ropes fastened the knots around his arms and throat. You beat it from the room by the fire escape. A jury would hang you high as Haman on that evidence. Damn it, there's a bad bruise on your chin wasn't there when we saw you yesterday. For all I know he may have done it before you put him out."

"I struck against a corner in the darkness," Kirby said.

"That's what you say. You've got to explain it somehow. I think your story's fishy, if you ask me."

"Then you'd better call up the police," suggested Lane.

"I didn't say I was going to call the cops," retorted Jack sulkily. James looked at his cousin. Kirby Lane was strong. You could not deny his strength, audacious yet patient. He was a forty-horsepower man with the smile of a boy. Moreover, his face was a certificate of manhood. It was a recommendation more effective than words.

"I think you're wrong, Jack," the older brother said. "Kirby had no more to do with this than I had."

"Thanks," Kirby nodded. "Let's investigate this man Hull. What Kirby says fits in with what you saw a couple of evenings ago, Jack. I'm assuming he's the same man Uncle flung downstairs. Uncle told you he was a blackmailer. There's one lead. Let's follow it."

Reluctantly Kirby broached one angle of the subject that must be faced. "What about this girl in Uncle's office—the one in trouble? Are we goin' to bring her into this?" There was a moment's silence. Jack's black eyes slid from Lane to his brother. It struck Kirby that he was waiting tensely for the decision of James, though the reason for his anxiety was not apparent.

James gave the matter consideration, then spoke judicially. "Better leave her out of it. No need to smirch Uncle's reputation unless it's absolutely necessary. We don't want the newspapers gloating over any more scandals than they need."

The cattleman breathed freer. He had an odd feeling that Jack, too, was relieved. Had the young man, after all, a warmer feeling for his dead uncle's reputation than he had given him credit for?

As the three cousins stepped out of the Equitable Building to Stout Street a newsboy was calling an extra. "A-l-l 'bout Cunn'n'ham myst'ry. Huxtry! Huxtry!"

Kirby bought a paper. A streamer headline in red flashed at him.

HORIKAWA, VALET OF CUNNINGHAM, DISAPPEARS.

The lead to the story below was to the effect that Cunningham had drawn two thousand dollars in large bills from the bank the day of his death. Horikawa could not be found, and the police had a theory that he had killed and robbed his master for this money.

### CHAPTER XI.

#### THE CORONER'S INQUEST.

If Kirby had been playing his own hand only he would have gone to the police and told them he was the man who had been seen leaving the Paradox Apartments by the fire escape. But he could not do this without running the risk of implicating Wild Rose. Awkward questions would be fired at him that he could not answer. He decided not to run away from arrest, but not to surrender himself. If the police rounded him up, he could not help it; if they did not, so much the better.

He made two more attempts to see Wild Rose during the day, but he could not find her at home. When he at last did see her it was at the inquest, where he had gone to learn all that he could of the circumstances surrounding the murder.

There was a risk in attending. He recognized that. But he was moved by an imperative urge to find out all that was possible of the affair. The force that drove him was the need in his heart to exonerate his friend. Though he recognized the weight of evidence against her, he could not believe her guilty. Under tremendous provocation it might be in character for her to have shot his uncle in self-defense or while in extreme anger. But all his knowledge of her cried out that she could never have chloroformed him, tied him up, then taken his life while he was helpless. She was too fine and loyal to her code, too good a sportsman, far too tender-hearted, for such a thing.

Yet the evidence assailed this conviction of his soul. If the Wild Rose in the dingy court-room had been his friend of the outdoor spaces, he would have rejected as absurd the possibility that she had killed his uncle. But his heart sank when he looked at this wan-faced woman who came late and slipped inconspicuously into a back seat, whose eyes avoided his, who was so plainly keyed up to a tremendously high pitch. She was dressed in a dark-blue tailored serge and a black sailor hat, beneath the rim of which the shadows on her face were dark. The room was jammed with people. Every aisle was packed and hundreds were turned away. In the audience was a scattering of fashionably dressed women, for it was possible the inquest might develop a sensation. The coroner was a short, fat, little man with a highly developed sense of his importance. It was his hour, and he made the most of it. His methods were his own. The young assistant district attorney lounging by the table played second fiddle.

(To be continued.)

### Faithful Mother Seal.

A sea-captain not long ago captured a young seal, hoping to tame and rear it on board his ship. He placed it in a sack to secure it, but wide as the ocean was, and swiftly as the ship sped on, the mother was as swift, and followed in search of her young. When it was first caught, the mother howled piteously, and the "baby" barked back its grief, but the man was relentless, and coolly watched the agonized mother follow him till the ship reached the wharf at Santa Barbara.

Here he thought his prize was safe, for surely no seal would venture there, and the ship was docked. Suddenly the mother gave a cry close to the ship, and the little one, as if obeying instructions, struggled, still in the sack, to the edge of the deck, and rolled itself overboard. The mother was seen to seize the sack rip it open with her sharp teeth, and joyfully claim her baby. She had swum after it for eighty miles.

The increased cost of fine teas has tempted some to try cheap, inferior teas to their sorrow. It is real economy to use "SALADA" since it yields to the pound more cups of a satisfying infusion and besides has such a fresh, delicious flavor.

### The Penitent Bull.

An Irishman was walking across a field when an angry bull rushed at him and tossed him over a fence.

The Irishman, recovering from his fall and looking up, saw the bull pawing and tearing up the ground. He smiled at the animal and said:

"If it was not for your bowing and scraping and your apologies, you gaste, I'd think you'd thrown me over this fence on purpose."

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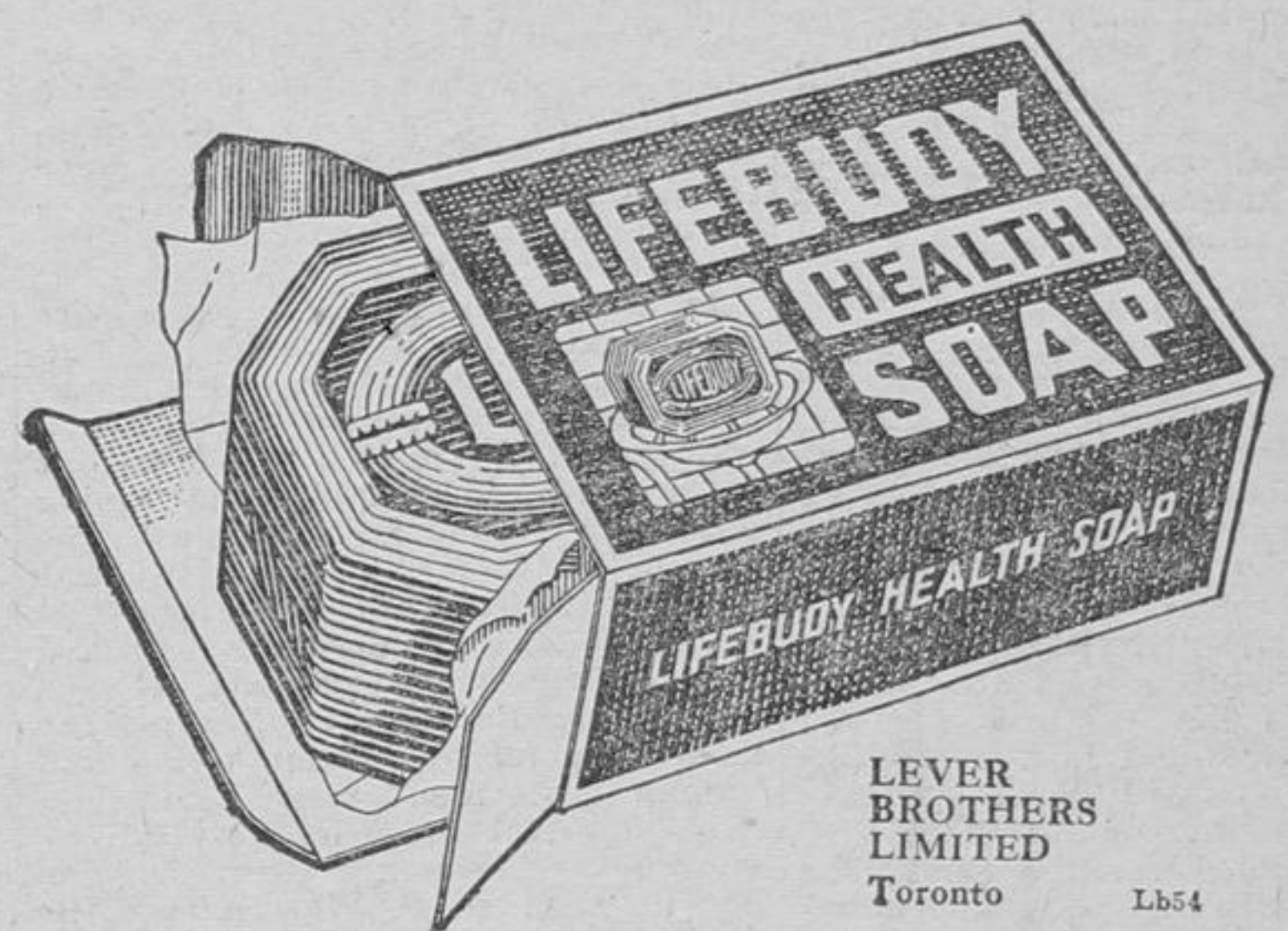
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### Surveying and Mapping by Aerial Photography.

A further step in co-ordination of effort between the Air Board of Canada and the different Government departments in the development of flying for peace time uses has been the institution by the Topographical Surveys Branch, Department of the Interior, of a section devoted to aerial photography. The progress made in the development of practical methods of applying the information obtainable by aerial photography for mapping and surveys is full of promise, and with the formation of a section for its study and development, progress should be rapid.

In the past the work has been largely experimental and has lacked co-ordination. In the future, all requests for aerial photography will pass through the Topographical Surveys Branch, the officers of which will consider the technical aspects of the operation and advise how the requirements of each can best be met, whether by oblique or vertical pictures, the height at which the photographs should be taken, their direction and inclination, the character of the lens to be used, and other features. The photographic work and flying will, as heretofore, be carried out by the Air Force, but the results will all be made available to the Topographical Surveys Branch for study and development.

### Minard's Liniment for Dandruff.

#### The Reason.

Little Willie came home from school looking very tearful.

"What's the matter," inquired his Uncle John.

"I've lost the quarter the teacher gave for the best boy in the class!" wailed Willie between his sobs.

"Well, never mind," said Uncle John. "Here's another quarter. But how did you manage to lose it?"

Willie—"Because I wasn't the best boy, uncle."

Talk to women; talk to women as much as you can. That is the best school.—Disraeli.



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