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## Tangled Trails

—BY WILLIAM MACLEOD RAINE

(Copyright, Thomas Allen.)

### CHAPTER XVII.—(Cont'd.)

"I'm the man who wrote that letter, an' I?" The lips of Olson were drawn back in a vicious snarl.

"You're the man."

"You can prove that, o' course."

"Yes."

"How?"

"By your handy 'tin'. I've seen three specimens of it to-day."

"Where?"

"One at the court-house, one at the bank that holds your note, an' the third at the office of the 'Enterprise.' You wrote an article urgin' the Dry Valley people to fight Cunningham. That article, in your own handwritin', is in my pocket right now."

"I didn't tell them to gun him, did I?"

"That's not the point. What I'm gettin' at is that the same man wrote the article that wrote the letter to Cunningham."

"Prove it! Prove it!"

"The paper used in both cases was torn from the same tablet. The writin' the same."

"You've got a nerve to come out here an' tell me I'm the man that killed Cunningham," Olson flung out, his face flushing darkly.

"I'm not sayin' that."

"What are you sayin', then? Shoot it at me straight."

"If I thought you had killed Cunningham I wouldn't be here now. What I thought when I came was that you might know somethin' about it. I didn't come out here to trap you. My idea is that Hull did it. But I've made up my mind you're hidin' somethin'. I'm sure of it. You as good as told me so. What is it?" Kirby, resting easy in the saddle with his weight on one stirrup, looked straight into the rancher's eyes as he asked the question.

"I'd be likely to tell you if I was, wouldn't I?" jeered Olson.

"Why not? Better tell me than wait for the police to third-degree you. If you're not in this killin' why not tell what you know? I've told my story."

"After they spotted you in the court-room," the farmer retorted. "An' how do I know you told all you know? Mebbe you're keepin' secrets, too."

Kirby took this without batting an eye. "An innocent man hasn't anything to fear," he said.

"Hasn't he?" Olson picked up a stone and flung it at a pile of rocks he had gathered fifty yards away. He was left-handed. "How do you know he hasn't? Say, just for an argument, I do know somethin'. Say I practically saw Cunningham killed an' hadn't a thing to do with it. Could I get away with a story like that? You know darned well I couldn't. Wouldn't the lawyers want to know how come I to be so handy to the place where the killin' was, right at the very time it took place, me who is supposed to have threatened to bump him off myself? Sure they would. I'd be tyin' a noose round my own neck."

"Do you know who killed my uncle?" demanded Lane point-blank. "Did you see it done?"

Olson's eyes narrowed. A crafty light shone through the slitted lids. "Hold yore hawsses. I ain't said I knew a thing. Not a thing. I was stringin' you."

Kirby knew he had overshot the mark. He had been too eager and had alarmed the man. He was annoyed at himself. It would take time and patience and finesse to recover lost ground. Shrewdly he guessed at the rancher's state of mind. The man wanted to tell something, was divided in mind whether to come forward as a witness or keep silent. His evidence, if it was clear enough, would implicate Hull; but, perhaps indirectly, it would involve himself, too.

"Well, whatever it is you know, I hope you'll tell it," the cattleman said. "But that's up to you, not me. If Hull is the murderer, I want the crime fastened on him. I don't want him to get off scot free. An' that's about what's goin' to happen. The fellow's guilty, I believe, but we can't prove it."

"Can't we? I ain't sure o' that." Again, through the narrowed lids, wary guile glittered. "Mebbe we can when the right time comes."

"I doubt it," Lane spoke casually and carelessly. "Any testimony against him loses force if it's held out too long. The question comes up, why didn't the witness come right forward at once. No, I reckon Hull

will get away with it—if he really did it."

"Don't you think it," Olson snapped out. "They've pretty nearly got enough now to convict him."

The rough rider laughed cynically. "Convict him! They haven't enough against him even to make an arrest. They've got a dozen times as much against me an' they turned me loose. He's quite safe if he keeps his mouth shut—an' he will."

Olson flung a greasewood shrub on a pile of brush. His mind, Kirby could see, was busy with the problem before it. The man's caution and his vindictive desire for vengeance were at war. He knew something, evidence that would tend to incriminate Hull, and he was afraid to bring it to the light of day. He worked automatically, and the man on horseback watched him. On that sullen face Kirby could read, fury, hatred, circumspection, suspicion, the lust for revenge.

The man's anger barked at Lane. "Well, what you waitin' for?" he asked harshly.

"Nothin'. I'm goin' now." He wrote his Denver address on a card. "I you find there is any evidence against Hull an' want to talk it over, perhaps you'd rather come to me than the police. I'm like you. If Hull did it I want him found guilty. So long."

He handed Olson his card. The man tossed it away. Kirby turned his horse toward town. Five minutes later he looked back. The settler had walked across to the place where he had thrown the card and was apparently picking it up.

The man from Wyoming smiled. He had a very strong hunch that Olson would call on him within a week or ten days. Of course he was disappointed, but he knew the game had to be played with patience. At least he had learned something. The man had in his possession evidence vitally important. Kirby meant to get that evidence from him somehow by hook or crook.

What was it the man knew? Was it possible he could have killed Cunningham himself and he was trying to throw the blame of it on Hull? Was that why he was afraid to come out in the open with what testimony he had? Kirby could not forget the bitter hatred of Cunningham the farmer cherished. That hatred extended to Hull. What a sweet revenge to kill one enemy and let the other one hang for the crime!

A detail jumped to his mind. Olson had picked up a stone and thrown it to the rock pile—with his left hand.

### CHAPTER XVIII.

"BURNIN' A HOLE IN MY POCKET."

Cole Sanborn passed through the Welcome Arch at the station carrying an imitation-leather suitcase. He did not take a car, but walked up Seventeenth Avenue as far as the Markham Hotel. Here he registered, left his luggage, and made some inquiries over the telephone.

Thirty minutes later he was shaking hands with Kirby Lane.

"You dawg-goned old hellamile, what you mean comin' down here an' gettin' thrown in the calaboose?" he demanded, thumping his friend on the shoulder with a heavy brown fist.

"I'm sure enough glad to see you, Mr. Champen-of-the-World," Kirby answered, falling into the easy vernacular of the outdoor country. "Come to the big town to spend that thousand dollars you won the other day?"

"Y'betcha; it's burnin' a hole in my pocket. Say, you blamed ol' horn-load, how come you not to stay for the

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finals? Folks was plumb disappointed we didn't ride it off."

"Tell you about that later. How long you figurin' to stay in Denver, Cole?"

"I dunno. A week, mebbe. Fellow at the Empress wants me to go on that circuit an' do stunts, but I don't reckon I will. Claims he's got a trained bronc I can show on."

"Me, I'm gonna be busy as a dog with fleas," said Kirby. "I got to find out who killed my uncle. Suspicion rests on me, on a man named Hull, on the Jap servant, an' on Wild Rose."

"On Wild Rose!" exclaimed Cole, in surprise. "Have they gone crazy?"

"The police haven't got her yet, old-timer. But their suspicions will be headed that way right soon if I don't get busy. She thinks her evidence will clear me. It won't. It'll add a motive for me to have killed him. The detectives will figure out we did it together, Rose an' me."

"Hell's bells! Ain't they got no sense a-tall?"

Kirby looked at his watch. "I'm headed right now for the apartment where my uncle was killed. Gonna look the ground over. Wanta come along?"

"Surest thing you know. I'm in this to a fare-you-well. Go ahead. I'll take yore dust."

The lithe, long-bodied man from Basin, Wyoming, clumped along in his high-heeled boots beside his friend. Both of them were splendid examples of physical manhood. The sun tan was on their faces, the ripple of health in their blood. But there was this difference between them, that while it was written on every inch of Sanborn that he lived astride a cow-pony, Kirby might have been an irrigation engineer or a mining man from the hills. He had neither the bow legs nor the ungraceful roll of the man who rides most of his waking hours. His clothes were well made and he knew how to carry them.

As they walked across to Fourteenth Street, Kirby told as much of the story as he could without betraying Esther McLean's part in it. He trusted Sanborn implicitly, but the girl's secret was not his to tell.

(To be continued.)

The great elk once overran Britain; it lingered in Scotland until Roman times.

The secret of life lies in forming right judgments from insufficient data.

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## Conserving Canada's Gas Supply

To be called upon to control and recap a gas well "running wild" and spouting a sheet of flame 75 feet in the air and to do this by shooting off the broken valve by means of steel-jacketed bullets from a rifle was the recent experience of Dominion Government engineers in the course of their unending campaign to prevent a wastage of natural resources, no matter where located and regardless of the difficulties involved. While the regulations governing oil and natural gas development explicitly state that all mishaps on leases must be corrected by the operator, it has happened that through the falling of valves and cappings or the tampering with fittings and equipment by ignorant or maliciously disposed persons, wells have become a menace to the field and wasters of gas or oil.

The case referred to above, and which may be cited as a typical example of the resourcefulness and determination of those who did the work, was that of a natural gas well at Pelican Rapids, on the Athabaska River, about 165 miles north of Edmonton, Alberta. During March, 1922, it was reported that the capping of this well had, for some unknown reason, failed and that the resulting flow of gas had become ignited. When the fact that this well was on fire was reported to the North West Territories and Yukon Branch of the Department of the Interior, which is charged with the administration of the law with respect to oil and gas operations and the preventing of waste therein, the branch immediately sent its petroleum engineer to investigate and to recap the well as soon as possible.

### Fighting Intense Heat.

Upon reaching the ground it was found that the opening through which the gas was escaping produced a flame of a peculiar shape with one end beating upon the ground close to the casing. The intensity of the heat generated was so great that the pipe and fittings were heated to incandescence and it was clear that nothing could be done until the fire was extinguished. This had to be done with what equipment could be improvised on the ground, far away from machine shops or other aids.

The first step in the operation was to change the shape of the flame so as to make it possible for men to work in closer proximity to the casing. This could only be done by cutting the casing below the control valve and allowing the gas to be discharged upwards and the flame to take the shape of that of an ordinary candle.

A Lee-Enfield rifle was employed

### PRESERVING EGGS.

To preserve eggs in salt, they should be packed in a large box filled with salt. The eggs should be packed in layers so that the whole does not have to be disturbed when only using a few at a time. Keep in a cool place.

When using the waterglass solution, mix thoroughly one and one-half quarts of commercial waterglass with eighteen quarts of boiled water. Place this solution in an earthen jar and pack the eggs carefully in it, being sure that the eggs are covered by at least two inches. Cover the jar to prevent evaporation, and keep in a dark, cool place.



Quite So.

"This book says a swallow can travel six thousand miles without stopping."

"He'd have to travel further than that nowadays."

### The Pest.

"My idea of zero in the nonpaying guest," said Uncle Eb, "is the lady who is praying for a freeze to relieve her hay fever when we need three weeks more of hot weather to ripen the corn."

### Makes a Better Job.

Before cleaning and pressing men's suits, be sure to turn the pockets wrongside out and brush out all accumulated dirt. Hang on line to air.

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## WRIGLEYS



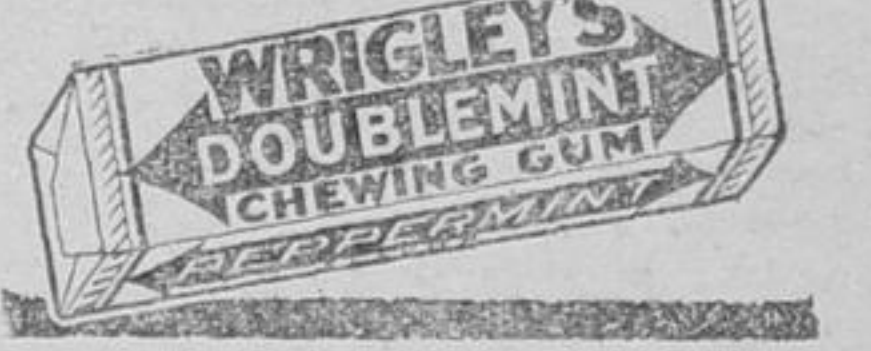
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cold chisels and attach a new control valve. The work was then completed and the well left in such shape as to be safe and at the same time ready to be again operated when the necessity arose.

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