INSTALLMENT TWELVE

THE STORY SO FAR: Ellen Carey, the postmaster's daughter, seems interested in two men, Jeff Brand, rustler, and Calhoun Terry, manager of a big ranch who is regarded inimically by both rustlers and small ranchers. Four rustlers had been mysteriously killed. A lot of Texas ex-peace officers have been brought in by the big ranchers to kill off rustlers. Terry objects and his ranch is offered for sale in small parcels to small ranchers. Jeff shows the killer's note to Ellen. She thinks it's Jack Turley's writing. Jeff confronts Jack, who had posed as a rustler though really a spy for one of the big ranchmen. Jeff kills Jack and sends the body to the chief of the big ranchers.

* * * * * * * * * * *

CHAPTER XXIV

A Texan led the packhorse back to the camp among the pines.

"Couple of fellows brought some freight in for Mr. McFaddin and then lit out like the heel flies were after them," he said. "The other boys are chasin' them. They acted right funny."

McFaddin and Ellison stepped forward.

The Texan released the diamond hitch and whipped off the tarp. A body slid to the ground. Those present stood staring at what they saw.

Ellison leaned over him. "It's Jack Turley, one of our stock detectives," he said.

"By God, they got the double-crossing killer," McFaddin said bluntly.

From the coat pocket Ellison drew the note Morgan had written.

"Here is yore killer," he read, "come back to report."

"We had better move fast," Gaines said. "After being chased off the map these two fellows must suspect something."

"Let's go," McFaddin said with a sardonic laugh. "We don't have to wait any longer for Turley to guide us. He's here. A little late for his appointment with us, but I reckon he couldn't help that."

The regulators, as the invaders called themselves, looked to their cinches and mounted. From the prong they wound up through the pines into a country of open range too wild for homesteaders. The spread was too rocky and too hilly to invite settlers. Presently they would cross a mountain spur from which they would drop down into a district of gulches, rock rims, and small valleys where at not too frequent intervals a few nesters and cow thieves held the fort unmolested, except when posses from the big ranches came hunting stock that was missing. On Ellison's list were the names of a dozen men who lived in this section.

They straggled forward in no formation, Ellison and McFaddin in the van. From a long, rocky slope they came into a little mountain park, not far from the summit.

McFaddin lifted a shout of warning and whipped up his rifle. Two men had appeared on the rim and started to ride down, but at sight of the large company pulled up and turned. One of them flung up a hand in protest as the Flying V C man's gun cracked. The echoes of that shot rolled across the valley. A sorrel horse stumbled and flung his rider, then raced across the slope with reins flying wild. The man who had given the Indian peace sign called to his companion. It was almost as though the dismounted man had bounced back from the ground, so quickly was he on his feet. He ran a few steps along the hillside and vaulted to the back of the uninjured horse behind his friend. Three or four Texans fired, but the horse and its double load reached the rim and vanished.

Giving the cowboy's "Hi-yi-yippy-yi!" McFaddin brought his cow-pony to a canter and pursued. The others followed him.

A roan horse, carrying two men, was traveling fast down the side of the spur but was already showing signs of distress.

"We've got 'em!" yelled McFaddin. "Come on, boys."

Just ahead was a little clearing with a log cabin on the edge of a creek. A man had appeared from behind it driving a few cattle. He was at casual ease, in no hurry whatever. At the sound of the roaring guns he swung his head, took in the situation, and instantly forgot there was such a thing as leisure in the world. While the fugitives were still a good two hundred yards distant he jumped his horse to a gallop and vanished up a draw.

The hunted men flung themselves from the back of the horse and ran into the house. The door slammed behind them. The pursuers dragged their horses to a halt and many of them dismounted. Frightened by the firing, the horse of the men in the cabin splashed through the creek and bolted.

Ellison took command. He named four or five men to follow the cowman who had disappeared up the ravine. The others he distributed about the place, most of them in or back of the barn, which was over seventy-five yards from the house. Several he stationed across the brook in the brush near the edge of the clearing. A steady, intermittent sniping centered on the cabin. Already its windows were shattered. The defenders had dug spaces in the dry mud between the logs of the walls, which they used as loopholes for their guns. One had a rifle. Apparently the other was armed only with a revolver.

The door of the cabin opened a few inches and a hand came out to wave a white flag. A voice called out something that was drowned in the crash of guns. Quickly the arm and the rag were withdrawn, the door shut and bolted.

"Why not let them surrender?" Gaines asked. "Save us some time and trouble."

"Let 'em surrender and then hang 'em?" McFaddin asked harshly. "No, by Jackson! I won't stand for that. If we're going to hang 'em we'll have to dig 'em out."

"We don't even know they are on our list," Collins said.

"We know damn well they are. They are the same scalawags who brought Turley's body back."

The forted man with the rifle served notice he was not to be taken too lightly. He wounded in the arm a ranch foreman who exposed himself rather carelessly. Ellison passed the word among his men not to take any unnecessary chances. A few moments later a bullet tore through the calf of one of the Texans.

The men who had pursued the cowman returned after a time. On account of his long start they had failed to catch him. This was disturbing. It meant that news of the invasion was bound to get out. The leaders held a consultation.

"We can't fool away the rest of the day here," McFaddin said impatiently. "To heck with this siege stuff. I move we charge the cabin and wipe 'em out."

"Losing three or four men!" Ellison scoffed. "That would be dumb of us."

Collins then made a suggestion. "You're both right. What say Clint

"We've got 'em!" Yelled McFaddin.

stays here with ten or twelve men and attends to this business while I take the rest and sweep the hill pockets? I can get back before dark."

After some discussion the Antelope Creek man's plan was adopted.

McFaddin said he would ride with Collins. There were some thieves in this district he had been wanting to get a crack at for a long time.

"Be sure not to let yourselves get cut off from us," Ellison cautioned. "And don't waste any time. We've got about four hours, I would guess. Five at the most. By that time we'll have to be on our way, or we may not get out of here at all. Whatever happens, don't be tempted to swing too wide a loop.

CHAPTER XXV

Ellen was making up a post-office report that had to be sent to Washington when she saw a horseman emerge from a fissure in the hills and come down the long slope to the ranch at a gallop. He was flogging his mount with a quirt. Jim Budd was at the door, leaning against the jamb, resting from the exertion of having swept the floor. It was in his horoscope that he would go through life as easily as he could.

"Seems to be a gen'elman in a hurry, Miss Ellen," Jim drawled.

A faint unease stirred in her. Men did not usually ride like that except to carry bad news.

The rider drew up in front of the post-office and flung himself from the horse. The man was Lee Hart. He spoke to Ellen, who had come out to the porch.

"Where's Lane?" he demanded.

"Father is down with the men fencing a new pasture," Ellen answered. "About three miles due west from here . . . Do you have to see him?"

Hart mopped his perspiring forehead with a bandanna handkerchief. "Never saw it fail!" he cried bitterly. "Need a man and he ain't there."

"What's wrong, Lee?" the girl wanted to know.

"Wrong! Everything." The heavy-set, bowlegged man slammed his dusty old hat on the porch floor. "A bunch of wild Injuns is raidin' this country. They came bustin' down on my place with forty guns a-poppin'."

"Indians?" the girl repeated incredulously.

"Well, these Texas warriors the paper was telling about. They was chasing two guys. I lit out lickety-split."

"Who were they chasing?"

"I dunno. They're likely wiped out by now. They hadn't but one horse between them. When I took my last look they were making for my house to hole up."

"What do you want with father?"

"Well, we got to spread the news to everybody. I'm headin' for Round Top. Someone has got to ride up the Alford road and let the settlers there know. Tell 'em to meet here. Send the cook if you haven't got anybody else."

"No," Ellen said promptly. "I'm not going to get Jim mixed up in it."

"Mixed up in it? You tellin' me yore black man is too good to work with us?" Hart snarled.

"I'm telling you it is none of his business."

Hart fastened his gaze on two horsemen coming down the road at a slow trot. In his eagerness to tell the news to Jeff Brand he forgot his indignation. He bowlegged through the dust to meet the riders as they drew up at the hitching-post.

"Have you heard, Jeff? The big outfits have done brought a bunch of Texans here to run us outa the country. Paul Vallery told me this mo'ning. He got it from Lane Carey who read it in the Denver Republican. Well, sir, I seen them comin' down the hill hell-for-leather and lit out just in time. They was chasin' two birds."

Brand swung from the saddle to go forward to meet Ellen. "Chasing who?" he asked over his shoulder.

"I dunno. Couldn't wait to find out. I burned the wind getting away from there."

"You don't know what became of the two men?"

"They got into my house and forted up, but I reckon they couldn't hold out long. Must of been a hundred in that army."

"Fifty-eight," Brand corrected.

"How do you know?"

"We hid on a ridge and counted them," Morgan said.

"A bunch of warriors brought in to shoot down innocent men!" Hart cried angrily. "We'll see about that. I'm on my way to tell our friends at Round Top."

"No need," Jeff said. "We've already sent a messenger. Better stay and gather a relief party to ride over to your place. We'll need every man we can get."

"When do you aim to go?"

"We've got to get off right quick if we're going to save the boys they have trapped. Say inside of an hour."

"We can't get together seventy or eighty men that quick," Hart protested.

"Don't need more than ten or a dozen. We'll lie in the rocks above and shoot down at them."

"Not me," Hart answered promptly. "I just got out with my skin, and I don't aim to try it again."

Jeff looked at the man contemptuously.

"Go hide under a bed, you louse." The pale blue eyes of Brand burned into the man. "But not till you've done your job. Ride up the Alford road and send down all the men you can find. After that you can go jump in a lake."

Jeff turned away and joined Ellen on the porch. He grinned at her. "Well, sometimes a newspaper piece turns out to be true," he said.

Morgan joined those on the porch. "I'd better ride Deep Creek and warn the folks up that way. From what Lee says looks like these fellows are headed there."

"Yes. Better rope one of the horses in the corral." Jeff added casual information. "I'm going to Lee's place to see what has happened to the two trapped in his house. Maybe I can make a diversion from the rocks that will help them."

"Must you, Jeff?" asked Ellen in a low voice.

He nodded. "Can't desert two of our men without trying to help them." His manner was cheerful and nonchalant. "Dave has picked the tough job. He's liable to meet a bunch of these Texans any turn of the road. But someone has to warn our friends."

"I suppose so. But you don't have to go and attack fifty men, do you?"

Brand's gaze followed Morgan as that young man swung on his horse to ride to the corral. "He'll do it, too, if they don't get him first. That guy will do to ride the river with." His attention came back to what the girl had said.

"I don't see what you can do alone."

"Can't tell till I get there. Soon as a bunch of the boys roll in tell them to hop over to Lee's place fast as their broncs will bring them."

She watched him, always spectacular, fling himself into the saddle without touching the horse. He waved his big white hat in farewell as he rode away.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

OUR DEBT MORTGAGES US UP TO ONE-THIRD

WHEN FIGURES run into the billions they become meaningless. To any of us they are incomprehensible. They are no more than the ciphers it takes to write such a number. Our public debt, that of our municipal, county, state and federal governments, cannot be stated in comprehensible terms unless some comparison can be given.

We, as a people, owe today approximately 125 billions of dollars. That includes the bonded indebtedness of our municipal, county, state and federal governments. It includes also the indebtedness of the numerous administrations, corporations and bureaus established by congress and for which we have guaranteed the accounts, amounting to several billion dollars. It includes the billions of appropriations made by congress which will be spent during the next 12 to 18 months, in excess of any revenue with which to pay.

The total value of everything we, as a people, own is placed at 375 billion dollars. That is the value of all our land, our homes, farms, livestock, crops, railroads, mines, forests, factories, machines, merchandise, everything, including our bank deposits, insurance policies and currency.

We, as a people, have mortgaged everything we own to the extent of one-third of its total value.

And the end is not in sight.

In 1870 the Germans defeated France and captured Paris. The French people, at that time, ransomed their country for what was then considered the tremendous sum of one billion dollars. Today it would take 125 times that sum to ransom America, to buy off our creditors.

The end will be for us as a people just what the end always is for an individual when the indebtedness becomes greater than he can pay, greater than his assets will produce, when sold under the hammer—bankruptcy. And that means chaos for all of us.

* * *

FOR DEFENSE America needs mechanical equipment. It needs especially new and big guns to defend our coast line; planes, and lots of them, for the same purpose. Grant the defeat of England, which will not happen, and the surrender to Hitler of the British navy, it would still be impossible for a German army to invade our shores. Big guns and an abundance of planes will protect our coast line from naval or air attacks.

We consider the city of Honolulu and the island of Oahu impregnable, not because of the large force of soldiers stationed there, but because of the big guns and the airplanes. To defend America against any attack that might be made upon us for many years, we need big guns and airplanes along our coast line. We need ordnance far more than quantities of manpower and such manpower as is needed must be technically trained to be effective.

* * *

SEEING IN MANY COUNTRY NEWSPAPERS departments by county agents recalls a Sunday spent with Howard Gross in the early years of the century.

Gross arrived at my home early in the morning before I had breakfasted. He had spent Saturday afternoon and evening with James J. Hill, and was enthused over an idea Mr. Hill had expressed for carrying agricultural education to the farmer as a means of producing more and better farm crops. Through the day and evening we worked into a rough draft what later became the Smith-Lever bill, the final passage of which created the county agent system throughout the United States.

The following week an organization was perfected to back the proposed legislation. Twice each month for a period of nearly five years that organization met at the Union League club in Chicago before it succeeded in getting the bill through both houses of congress. It seemed strange to me at the time that the strongest opposition came from the agricultural department and it was finally passed despite that opposition. It was insisted there was danger of the county agent becoming part of a political machine used to control the farm vote. Those of us who were attempting to secure enactment of the bill made every effort to prevent such a possibility.

James J. Hill, Howard Gross and the small group of men forming the National Soil Fertility league were responsible for the county agent system of carrying agricultural education to the farmer. The idea was Mr. Hill's.

* * *

TRAVEL BUSINESS

THE UNUSUAL JOB of a Chicago friend has been seriously affected by the war. Mason Warner is a tourist scout. For years he has been seeking places for people to go who wish to travel for pleasure or personal enlightenment. The war has practically barred travel throughout the world for Americans, with the exception of North, South and Central America, and for the last two years and more his scouting has been confined to those fields.

Practical Cutout Novelties

MISCELLANEOUS cutout designs are here to tempt hammer and saw into use. At top, left, is a very practical item—the "Leave a Note" bungalow. Inch wood makes this, and it is to be placed beside the front door. Pad and pencil inside the hinged door invites friends to leave word if they call when you are away. Practical, too, are the doorknockers—the red-headed woodpecker and the horse. And kitchen or dining room will welcome this clever cottage flower holder and the matching shade pulls.

* * *

Jig, coping or keyhole saw may be used in cutting these articles from wood—bright enamels for painting them. Pattern Z9310, 15 cents, gives outlines and complete directions. Send your order to:

AUNT MARTHA
Box 166-W Kansas City, Mo.
Enclose 15 cents for each pattern desired. Pattern No.....
Name .....
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ASK ME ANOTHER?
A General Quiz

The Questions

1. Approximately how many members has the British house of lords?
2. What is a euphemism?
3. What is meant by the French phrase vis a vis?
4. What was the nationality of the traveler Marco Polo?
5. Nemesis, the avenging deity of the ancient Greeks, was represented as what, man, woman, or beast?
6. What river supplies the water by which the Panama canal locks are operated?
7. The science of pomology deals with what?
8. United States cruisers are named after what?
9. Does the United States award medals or decorations for achievements in the arts and sciences?

The Answers

1. Seven hundred and forty.
2. A mild name for something disagreeable.
3. Opposite.
4. Italian (Venetian).
5. Woman.
6. The Chargres.
7. Fruit.
8. Cities.
9. No.

In a Minority

A well-known British dramatic agent, Golding Bright, who died recently, handled Shaw's plays among others. But on their first encounter Bright was in the gallery on a Shaw first night. It seems he was the only member of the audience who didn't like the play. Anyway, when Shaw came forward to take the "author" call, Bright greeted him with a full-lunged "Boo!"

"Quite, my dear sir," said Shaw. "But what are you and I among so many?"

INDIGESTION
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Doctors know that gas trapped in the stomach or gullet may act like a hair-trigger on the heart. They set gas free with the fastest-acting medicines known—the fastest act like the medicines in Bell-ans Tablets. Try Bell-ans today. If the FIRST DOSE doesn't prove Bell-ans better, return bottle to us and receive DOUBLE money back. 25c. at all drug stores.

Past Mischief

To mourn a mischief that is past and gone, is the next way to draw new mischief on.—Shakespeare.

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Distrusting

It is more disgraceful to distrust than to be deceived by our friends.—La Rochefoucauld.

Wanted FIREARMS CAMERAS
Highest cash prices paid for used guns, hunting and target rifles, pistols and revolvers, binoculars, telescopes, cameras and projectors. Send us a complete description of what you have to sell—or ship direct and we'll mail our check promptly.
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Equal rights for all, special privileges for none.—Thomas Jefferson.

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Do Not Go WITH ADVERTISING
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Whenever you go into a store and buy an item of advertised merchandise, it doesn't make any difference what, you are getting more for your money—more in quality and service—than you would get if you spent the same amount for something which was not advertised.