

YOUTH RIDES WEST

By WILL IRWIN

WNU-Served

CHAPTER IX

—11—

Had Town Marshal McGrath assaulted Marcus Handy on a day when the camp was booming along at its accustomed pace, the politics of Cottonwood might at once have rushed forward to a climax. I speculate yet on this, wondering if it all would have turned out more happily, in that event, for Marcus Handy and me. More and more the "business element" and the better men who lived by industry—which meant of course most of us—were beginning to see a change must come. But also, more and more had the gamblers, the dispensers of vice and the actual criminals grown insolent and overbearing through immunity. To meet this situation head-on would have taken all a man's courage with both property and life. If the citizenry of Cottonwood boasted in common any virtue, it was courage. But things were going very well for most of us; decent, public opinion in general, while deplored our civic condition, inclined to let well enough alone. It needed a dramatic incident to crystallize the western spirit of fair play, to translate sentiment into action. This unfair and brutal assault by a swami of the law might have served that purpose—but for the discovery on Hayden hill.

The ebullient joy inspired by that event left no room in the public bosom for any other emotion. By afternoon the camp had become a madhouse; by night, a joyous chaos. It was settled now, said the public opinion of the bar-rooms. Cottonwood was a "permanent camp." Permanent! She was the greatest camp ever discovered in the Rockies—the world—in the universe!

Even Marcus Handy, nursing his physical and moral injuries, was caught up in the universal wave of optimism and enthusiasm. He had better reason than most of the rest. Before I had finished staunching his wounds, I had broken the news in one confused burst; and hastened to inform him that he was to be my partner. Marcus balked a little at that.

"I'm afraid you're letting your generosity get away with you, boy!" he said. "But it's the way I'd expect you to act," he added shyly.

"Someone's got to stake me, or I can't develop that claim," said I, "and it had better be you than anyone I know." The man's quaint habit of secrecy about his most vital affairs had infected me, and I had never told him about my background in the East.

"All right; I guess I'll take a whirly with you," announced Marcus at last. "If I can keep any of my money out of the maw of that d—n paper company!"

So was born the partnership which developed and operated the Upper Case claim on Hayden hill, which was the name given the location, in honor of Buck. For of course, when we came to name it, we used a printing term. Let me tell here, once for all, the story of the Upper Case, simple but typical. Hayden hill was "spotted." The ore, as many learned by hard experience, lay in pockets, great and small, and not the most experienced geologists could prophesy their lay from the surface conformation. The Hayden and Croly tunnel tapped one of these pockets—nearly the greatest. Our shaft was only fifty yards away, yet never, from the morning when we turned the first shovelful of earth until the night when its mouth was boarded up as a dangerous prospect hole, did it turn up an ounce of paying ore. After we had sunk to a depth below which carbonates had never yet been discovered on Hayden hill, we abandoned it as a bad job. Then a company with a theory that a deep sulphide formation underlay the whole hill made offers for some of the unproductive or worked-out claims. We sold for just enough money to pay Marcus back what he had sunk in it, plus a block of stock. I am keeping the stock yet—as a souvenir.

But Marcus, when we had patched him up with court-plaster from the drug store, displayed a nobler emotion than greed of gold or hate of man. "She's the biggest story that ever came out in this camp!" he said. "We've got to spread ourselves! We're making history, boy. When Cottonwood is capital of the state, this issue of the Courier will be framed in the statehouse for a souvenir! You know the story. Write it for all you're worth."

My story finished, Marcus sent me forth to get an interview with Buck. Estimating the probabilities, I repaired straight to Huffaker's. My judgment had led me aright. Already, the first story of the hotel was finished and occupied; and the dining-room and bar, as I approached, radiated light, babbles and song. I pushed inside. Buck, still in his red flannel shirt, his overalls tucked into his muddy boots, was dining in state. Heading a long table heaped with food, pinnacled with champagne bottles, he had seated Jim Huffaker at his right, Isidore Cohen at his left. The company was pieced out with "mining men," brokers, even Taylor the banker—the financial aristocracy of the camp. I had scarcely stepped through the door when Buck saw me and rose to his feet, roaring boisterously welcome.

"Gents!" he cried, rapping for order with the butt of an empty bottle. "There's the mascot! There's the tenderfoot that brought me luck! Step up, kid, and let 'em see you. He's going to be rich too! Jim, 's my credit still good? All right. Whee again!"

So I was surrounded, congratulated, welcomed prematurely to the financial aristocracy. While the false light of adulation tickled my vanity as well as my sense of humor, I had no desire to sit with the mighty that evening;

life had moved so fast since Buck's messenger woke me as to yield no opportunity for seeing Constance. On the plea of urgent business necessity, I got Buck away from the table, dragged him past the clutching, congratulating hands, shut him up in a back room of Huffaker's bar, and interviewed him.

"Well, Buck," I said, "now that you're rich, what are you going to do? Go East and settle down?"

"East, h—!" exclaimed Buck. "These here Rockies is good enough for me!"

"Here in Cottonwood?" I asked.

"Sure! Cert! What's the use of movin' to New York or Frisco when we're going to have New York right here?"

"Buck," I warned from the depths of my Yankee caution, "it's certain you have a very rich mine. There may be a million dollars down there, enough at any rate so that you might invest it and—"

"Sure I'm going to invest it!" said Buck. "Don't think I'm going to blow it all in, do you? In mines, I'll own this here camp before I'm through!"

"But mines are a matter of luck," I interrupted.

"Cert. And my luck has turned," replied Buck simply. I had no time for further argument, because a new delegation of prominent citizens was pounding at the door; and Buck, lapped in such jobs as he had never before known, was in no mood for introspection.

I hastened to Mrs. Barnaby's—late. Glancing through the door, I saw that the place at the head of the table was cleared; Constance had supper and departed. I went round to the sleeping tent and called. At the sound of my voice she came running forth into the twilight, both hands outstretched.

"I hear that you have struck it," she said, "and oh, I'm glad!"

I went all a-tremble; except for memory of that afternoon in the gulch, I should have lost my self-control again. She seemed to perceive my emotion; for she said quickly:

"We mustn't talk here by night this way—people gossip—I've had to make it a rule not to see men callers in the evening. Good night, Robert; I hope your claim makes a million!" and was gone through the tent-flap. Had I yielded to my impulses, I should have torn the canvas into shreds.

Reading page-prints that night, I glanced up at Marcus who was locking a form.

"Aren't you going to refer to the—McGrath episode?" I asked.

"None!" said Marcus cheerfully. "Crowded out to make room for more interesting matter. By the way, boy—don't you go taking this matter up with Marshal McGrath. Next time he'll shoot, and I don't want to lose my best and only reporter. Just keep out of his way. We're going to get the criminal news for the Courier from others than the appointed authorities."

"Is the campaign for municipal government abandoned then?" I asked, and held my breath for the answer. I esteemed Marcus, and did not like to think that he lacked nerve.

"No," he replied. "But when I cut my wolf loose again, old boss he's going to bite!" To which cryptic utterance he put a period with a resounding blow of his maul on the block.

The days passed, bringing the advance-guard of a new rush to Cottonwood camp. Again we were crowded beyond all possibility of accommodating our pilgrims and strangers.

At about this time Mike, the day bartender of the Silver Dollar saloon, began to loom up from the hazy mists of my general acquaintance. For some weeks now he had held a loose connection with the Courier as a solicitor of printing jobs on commission and a gatherer of small news items. The Silver Dollar, which stood just where the Main street encountered the cheap, open brothels of Pearl street, had a hard name in camp. Rumor called it headquarters for the thug element. As for Mike—I never knew his other name—he was a small, hatchet-faced man with a dead, incurable eye and the appearance in his street clothes of a respectable and somewhat self-efacing mechanic. He sold little at any time, and that little in a voice which sucked the words in through a set of narrow teeth slanted backward like an anaconda's. He used to bring his information as rough notes, written in a business hand which Spencerian flourishes contrasted oddly with its grammatical atrocities. Only by a process of painful cross-examination could I extract the painful human lights which made the story.

When we severed relations with the marshal's office, Mike became at once invaluable. Our necessary criminal news we got from his reports; and we never missed an essential item. Twice, after I had drawn from him his budget of information, he stepped over to Marcus, spoke a quiet word; they retired then to the space behind the printing-press—the only private place in our office—and talked in whispers. Except for the uncomfortable feeling of being on the outside and a touch of amusement at my editor's mania for dramatic secrecy, I gave little thought to these conferences.

One night Marcus did not come back from dinner. Mike, reporting at eight o'clock as was his habit, laid down his budget of notes and gave his usual illuminating explanations. He had only two unimportant hold-ups and a case of assault and battery; he was to be rich too! Jim, 's my credit still good? All right. Whee again!"

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the first synthetic perfume was made in 1850.

"Hello!" he cried as I approached; and then, somewhat sheepishly:

"What think of the new shell?"

"It's great. It's swell," I said, suppressing my smile. "You must be cashing in!"

"None!" replied Buck. "Not till next week. First shipment started to Denver yesterday. Don't have to pay. Everyone gives me tick." Then reverting a little shyly to the fascinating subject of his clothes:

"Since the boys elected me president of the Hayden Hill Mine Owners' association I kinder feel I ought to dog

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ORCHARD GLEANINGS

ANTHRACNOSE IS SERIOUS DISEASE

The agricultural experiment station of the North Carolina State college has just issued Bulletin No. 248, "Anthracnose of Dewberries and Its Control," which gives the results of several years of investigation with this disease, which has seriously affected dewberry growing in North Carolina. The bulletin is published as the result of work done by Prof. F. A. Wolf, formerly of the experiment station staff, and B. O. Dodge of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The authors state that anthracnose is the most serious disease affecting the dewberry crop and is due to a fungus which spreads more easily and rapidly in rainy weather. The anthracnose girdles the canes, causing them to die, and causes the berries to become scabby or brown, dry and woody.

After several seasons of continuous work in fighting the disease, Doctor Wolf found that the best way to control it was to remove thoroughly and destroy all growth immediately after harvest, and to spray the new growth.

"There are three critical times when the applications should be made," says the bulletin. "The first is during August when the new growth is about one foot high; the second, as soon as possible after the canes have been set up in the spring, and the third as soon as the petals have fallen. Bordeaux mixture 4-4-50 is recommended as probably the best spray material to use."

It is pointed out also that new plantings should not be infected by using old cane stubs which have been attacked by the disease.

The bulletin gives the latest fertilizer recommendations for growing dewberries, and outlines successful methods used by some of the leading growers of the section in combating diseases and in raising good crops.

In Hunting for Rabbits Use of Ferrets Barred

Many of our orchard men are greatly troubled by rabbits. These animals gnaw trees, eat shrubs and make nuisances of themselves generally.

Under the law farmers may kill such rabbits if they can catch them in the act of destroying property but that is not satisfactory. With a good ferret they could clean out their premises and save much trouble and expense, writes John T. McCormick in the *Rural New Yorker*. But the conservation law will not permit the use of ferrets and farmers want to know why? We therefore asked the secretary of the conservation commission to explain. Here is what he says:

"As you know, rabbits are one of the species of game protected by law, and can only be legally taken during the open season for the same with a gun fired at arm's length without rest between sunrise and sunset, except that the owner or occupant of farm lands may take rabbits at any time of the year and in any manner, except by the use of ferrets, where they are doing damage to property."

"The habits of the rabbit when not foraging for food are to live in burrows, and when hunted they will immediately take to the burrows for protection and, therefore, can be very easily captured, in the event that the use of a ferret is permitted. The ferret is placed in the burrow and either kills the rabbits that it finds in there or drives them out, and they are then readily captured by the hunter, either in a bag or in their hands or taken by means of shooting. This is the reason why the law was passed prohibiting the use of ferrets in hunting rabbits."

Proper Summer Pruning to Establish Fruiting

At certain stages in the care of an orchard, fruiting can be better established or maintained by the proper use of summer pruning. For instance, if the tree has a densely shaded top, early season thinning out of the upper part of the top tends to hasten instead of delay fruiting. Also, pinching of strongly growing shoots sometimes induces blossom bud formation if increased growth in diameter is made after the tipping is done. The trouble with this operation is that there is no certainty of how much growth will be made after tipping. It has already been noted that giving a dormant season type of cutting in the summer time after nearly all the growth of the season is completed, fails to give the growth type which is associated with blossoming.

If the need of the tree seems clear, and the type of response can be somewhat clearly forecasted, try such summer pruning as fits the case. If it is to be used merely as an experiment, leave it alone, or at least be prepared to be satisfied with an experimenter's results.

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The use of soft coal will make laundry work heavier this winter. Russ Bleaching Blue will help to remove that grimy look. At all grocers.—Advertiser.

It is in the power of man to make positive maladies disappear from the face of the globe!—Pasteur.

A retired bumbo man says that love is not the only thing that needs the services of an expert oculist.

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