WINTER RANGE

CHAPTER VI-Continued

Kentucky Jones grinned, but the grin was very faint. He was pitying the girl as he had never pitled anyone in his life. There was a forlorn desperation about her scheme which told him, better than anything else could have done, how heavily events had pressed down upon this girl. In effect, Jean Ragland was offering him all the tangible assets which she controlled to serve as a gunfighter, and a leader of confighters. Yet to the hest of his helief she was justified. There was nothing imaginary about the encroachment of Elliot; and if Campo persisted in his unaccountable state of paralysis the Bar Hook brand was done.

"What's Campo going to say to this?" he asked her.

"I'll take care of Campo."

Kentucky Jones found himself deeply stirred. Yet he would have thought himself a fool if he had accepted such a proposition only to please Jean. One consideration alone urged him to agree. He was anxious to talk to Bob Elliot: and he felt that the basis she suggested would give him every advantage in

"I'm not going to turn you down," he said at last. "But I can accept only on certain conditions. First, that too strenuous an objection is not made by your father. Another is that if Campo Ragland later decides to make his own fight; or if for any other reason I'm no longer needed, then I can withdraw, and the deal is off."

"I accept that," she said.

"Another condition is that the price of one dollar be changed to read: 'One dollar and such other consideration as the buyer shall consider proper, according to the state of the market upon delivery."

She objected vigorously to that; but since at worst it conceded him what profit he might consider justified, she at length gave in. She offered him her hand, closing a bargain which placed him in the most curious position he ever had occupied in his life.

"Jean," he said. "I'm going to ask you one question, and I want you to answer it. Do you know who killed John Mason?"

"No," she said instantly. "Kentucky. I swear that I don't know that! I thought I knew, until Zack Sanders was found; but now I'm just as sure that I was wrong."

"I won't try to get you to tell me," he said, "what you evidently don't want me to know. But, Jean, I tell you this: the time may come when I'll need your help and need it bad. When that time comes, I want you to remember that perhaps I wouldn't be in this if you hadn't asked me in."

"I won't forget." He got up and jerked on his coat. "I'm going to see Bob Elliot," he told

The back of her hand flew to her mouth. "Now?" she said faintly.

"It's as good a time as any, isn't it?" Jean Ragland turned white, "Then go on. You-I guess you know I wish you luck."

"I might need it," he admitted.

As he reached the door she suddenly called his name, and he turned back. She was staring after him, white-faced. "Are-will you be armed?" "I don't know. We'll see."

He was wondering, as he saddled a fresh pony, if she had commissioned him to kill Bob Elliot.

The buildings of the 88 were made variously of adobe, clapboards, and square-hewn logs.

Bill McCord stood in the doorway of the barn as Kentucky Jones came up. Kentucky had a feeling that he had way off.

"You want to see me?" McCord

"I'll talk to your boss, if he's here." Bill McCord rolled a crooked cigarette from one corner of his mouth to the other, "All right. He's up at the house." He did not offer any accommodations for Kentucky's horse.

Kentucky rode to what appeared to be the main door of a squat adobe which a glance of McCord's eye had indicated. The door opened as he pulled up, and Bab Elliot stood there, looking at him without expression.

"Hello, Bob," Kentucky said. Bob Elllot leaned against the side

doorway, lean-shouldered, straight-backed, looking competent and tall. "It seems very peculiar," he said with casual frostiness, "to see you

"I suppose so," said Kentucky, swinging down without invitation, "Are you going to ask me in or not?"

"I hadn't thought of it " said Fillet :

"Is there any special call for it?" "There is."

"Let's hear what your business is,

"It's a little matter of range rights,"

Kentucky told him, "In that case," said Elliot, "go back and tell your boss you fell down. I understand my rights on the Bake Pan, and Wolf Bench, too, just as well as

he does. And when he wants to talk to me he can come himself!"
"Ragland," sald Kentucky, "can speak on his own behalf, what and where he wants to, without advice from me-or from you either. It happens that this time I'm speaking for myself.

I came over to tell you that I've bought a fifth interest in the Bar Hook." Bob Elliot's face went blank with perfectly real astonishment.

Bob Elliot stared at him for a mo-

bought a-what?" You heard me, I think." By ALAN LE MAY

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ment more, "Come in here," he said at last. He turned his back and walked into the house; and Kentucky followed him, "I thought I understood you to say you'd bought into the Bar Hook," said Elliot as soon as the door was shut. "Now what in all h-1 can be your idea in that?"

"I was able to buy some hundreds of head of Bar Hook cattle at a very favorable price," Kentucky told him. "I'll make something on those cattle in the spring."

"In the spring," Elliot repeated.
"And where did you expect to hold them through the winter?"

"Right where they are."
Bob Elliot stared at him again while this soaked in, Then abruptly, unex-

pectedly, he turned away from Kentucky Jones and began to laugh, as Kentucky had seen him laugh before in Sheriff Hopper's office at Waterman. He pressed the back of his hand to his mouth and seemed to fight the paroxysm, which shook him as if he had been trying to strangle a fit of coughing. "This is rich," he said at last, "Nothing trivial about this transaction, I hope?"

"Hardly."

"So now naturally you want to talk to me."

"Naturally. Both technically and practically, for the time being I am a part owner of the Bar Hook. More particularly as regards the Bar Hool grazing rights."

"In short," said Elliot, "what you came here to tell me is that your share in the Bar Hook is a fighting share." "You can call it that."

Bob Elliot lighted a tailor-made cigarette. The ironically humorous glance of his frosty blue eyes had a snap like the flick of a whip. "That girl certainly got you in for something," he said.

"Yes?" Kentucky Jones smiled on one side of his mouth. Until now nelther had mentioned the incident in the sheriff's office which had terminated when Kentucky Jones had knocked Bob Elliot out. He held his peace, and besame circumstances. And that wasn't so long ago. Not so long ago!"

"This gets no place," said Kentucky. "I told you what I came to tell youthat lets me out. From now on look to yourself. And don't drive cattle into Bar Hook range-my range-without expecting them to come right home to

roost in a cloud of yells."
"Suits me," Elliot agreed. "Don't think I've forgotten the sore jaw you gave me in that run-in at Waterman. God knows I never hoped for such a chance to smash the two of you at once !"

Kentucky Jones grinned and turned to the door, "That's what I like to hear!" He stepped out to his horse and threw the reins over the animal's head. "Go tell that girl," said Elllot from

the door, "that her father can't hide behind you this trip-you ain't big enough in size. And-try to make her tell you what she knows!"

Kentucky was ready to admit-to himself-that that parting shot went home. What he could not escape from was the sure knowledge that Jean Ragland did know something, perhaps sev-eral things, which he should have known. But he returned Bob Elliot's sardonic grin.

"Come and see me some time." he said; and he went away from there.

CHAPTER VII

That was a good long-stepping horse Kentucky rode that day; so that it was still a little before the long winter dusk as he reached the half way point on his return ride. His pony pricked its ears forward sharply, and Kentucky brought the horse to a stop while he listened

Far ahead-whether it came from the Bake Pan or the Bench he could not tell-sounded a curious drum tat-

too, a thin popping whisper of gunfire.
For perhaps half a minute the far-off gun talk continued, oddly like the popping of grease in a skillet. Then it stopped abruptly, as if all of the guns had fallen silent together, and in the utter quiet of those vast snowy spaces there was no longer any indication that anything had happened. Kentucky gan the making of a cigarette; but he | Jones struck the spurs to his horse and

THE STORY FROM THE OPENING CHAPTER

At the inquest into the death of John Mason, banker, Jean, daughter of At the inquest into the death of John Mason, banker, Jean, daughter of Campo Ragland, owner of the Bar Hook ranch, where Mason met death, surreptitiously passes to Kentucky Jones the bullet which had killed Mason. Kentucky goes to work on the Bar Hook ranch. The Mason verdict is accidental death. Bob Elliot, owner of the adjoining range, drives his cattle on the Bar Hook land. Lee Bishop, Ragland's ranch boss, expostulates, and Bill McCord, Elliot's foreman, insults him. Bishop and Jones are astounded at Ragland's landifference to Elliot's action. Bishop urges Kentucky to try to influence Jean to arouse her father. He does so, unwillingly, and her reaction mystifies him. Zack arouse her father. He does so, unwillingly, and her reaction mystifies him. Zack Sanders, Bar Hook cook, is found dead, murdered. Sheriff Hopper, investigating Sanders' death, announces his knowledge that Mason also was murdered. Jones seeks to trace the ownership of a gun found on Zack Sanders, which he is confident has a bearing on the mystery.

what was in his mind,

"I'll tell you a couple of things for your own good," Bob Elliot went on. You're butting into a situation that you know very little about, Jones. You seem to think that this little difference of opinion that's coming up now between me and Ragland is something new. It isn't, We've had it all the time. Even without this new crisis brought on by Mason's death, there never could have been room for both the Bar Hook and the 88, in the long run. Sooner or later one or the other would have had to go. Up until now I've been willing to give Ragland a break for the sake of the peace. It just happens that the way things fall out I'm pot able to baby him any more. Don't you forget for a minute that the land in question is public domain."

"And that you're entitled to graze half way from your water to his. You'll have to govern your cattle count by that; and we don't want to see one head more."

Fillet made an impatient gesture with his cigarette. "It'll be'a long day," he said contemptuously, "when you tell me something about the cattle business in the rimrock, Jones. If you think Ragland has a case-ask Campo why he's sitting back in his corner, and sending you to make his bluff. Ask him. You might find out some thing you need to know."

Kentucky Jones shrugged. "I can't speak for what Campo will do. I've bought in on the understanding that the land my cattle are on is Bar Hook range-has always been Bar Hook range. I'll tell you straight out, Elliot -I don't mean to have that range forced. And if I have to take my boys and ram your stock right back down your throat, in order to hold my graze, stand from under! It's up to you."

Bob Elliot eyed him speculatively. "I don't think that you're going to make much of a war on the SS."

"I'll make what push I need to, no more-and no less." Elliot allowed himself a faint smile.

"I suppose you know you'll have to fight Campo himself, first?" "What makes you think so?" "For one thing," Elliot told him, "because when you hooked up with Campo Ragland you hooked up with a yellow

quitter." "I reckon," said Kentucky, "you might not be so quick to say that to Campo's face."

"You think not? I'll tell you one more thing you don't know about, I understand that you heard Bill McCord cuss out Lee Bishop, and send him home with his tail between his legs. Well, you can take it that Bill was only copying after his boss. Because this range has seen the day when I sent Campo Ragland home with his tail between his legs, under much the h-1 to Waterman. I want five more

thought that Elliot must have known | went up the irregular trail at the dead run, unbuttoning his coat as he rode so that it would not interfere with his

> From somewhere ahead of him in the trail came a muffled ground murmur, inarticulate and confused. He pulled his horse down to a gait at which he could listen to something beside his own pony's hoofs. The sound ahead developed swiftly into the hoofdrum of an approaching horse, that supremely stirring, unmistakable sound of a horse running desperately, fullstretch, half frantic under the punishment of spur and quirt.

> Kentucky Jones hesitated, then put his horse ahead again at a high lope. Within two furlongs the approaching horse burst suddenly from around a jutting outcrop of rock; and he saw that the rider was Jean Ragland.

> So close were they as they became visible to each other that as they pulled up their horses Jean's pony slipped to its haunches and almost went down. It recovered itself, however, and the two horses stood blowing and stirring restively on their feet, too steamy and nervous from their running to stand quiet.

"Jean! What's busted?"

She spoke rapidly but with clear coherence, "Jim Humphreys and Billy Petersen have run foul of four 88 cowboys, down on the Bake Pan. Lee Bishop and I were sitting on the rimwe saw the whole thing. Jim Humphreys is down. And they got Billy's horse-he took to cover behind his dead horse and began firing back. Oh, G-d, Kentucky-it was terrible! Sitting there and seeing it all, and unable to do anything-as if we were in another world-"

"Is Billy hit?"

"I don't know. Billy's horse bolted and went into a bucking fit; they were all peppering at him, but he got control of his horse and rode back to cover Jim. Then his horse somersaulted. and the 88 cowboys drew off as he fired from cover."

"Where's Lee Bishop?"

"He's riding down the rim trall to Billy and Jim, fit to break his neck. He wanted me to ride like the deell and get help. I didn't think the others would be back home yet, so I came down this trail hoping to pick you up."

"Come on." said Kentucky, jumping his horse up the trail. Jean put her horse into the trail behind him and they pushed on a steady run to where the fork of the trail led up the Bench to the Bar Hook. Here Kentucky stopped his horse and Jean pulled in alongside.

"Go back to the Bar Hook," he told her. "Harry Wilson ought to be back there by now. Tell him to take the best of the two cars and drive like

men out here by sun-up tomorrow. I want Bud Jeffreys and Crazy Harris—" he named three others he wanted, and four or five alternates in case some were not to be found. All were men he knew, now laid off for the winter

"Sure." "When you've put Harry Wilson on his way, bring a couple of horses and

at or near Waterman. "Can you remem-

come back. If your father's there-" "He isn't."

ber those?"

"If you see a couple of poles that would make a stretcher, bring 'em along—one of the horses can trail 'em travols. We'll take the boys to like a the Bake Pan camp."

"On the way!" Jean whirled her "Wait! Point out to me where Jin and Billy are."

Kentucky Jones made out a far-off bottle-shaped dot upon the snow among



"Go Back to the Bar Hook," He Told Her.

the other dark dots that were sage and grease-wood; he recognized this as Billy Petersen's fallen horse. He could not see where Jim Humphreys lay. But far off to the southwest he could see the faintly moving specks that were 88 riders.

"There they go," he whispered bitterly.

"One of them tried to turn back and over-ride Jim Humphreys," she said, but Billy Petersen drove him off. I can't see Lee Bishop down thereguess he hasn't got down the trail yet. I'll be back as quick as I can." She turned her horse and was gone in a flurry of hoof-lifted snow.

Kentucky Jones took the Bake Pan trail. Lee Bishop was twenty minutes ahead of him in reaching Billy Petersen and Jim Humphreys; but he had sighted Kentucky on the down trail, and he waited now for him to come

"They got Jim Humphreys," said Lee Bishop morosely. "I bet he never lived to hit the ground. If that boy was shot once he was shot half a dozen times.

"What about Billy?"

Billy Petersen was leaning against his dead horse, his legs stretched upon his folded saddle blanket. In the falling light his face looked a pale graygreen. "I'm all right," he said without conviction.

"He busted his ankle, some way when his horse flopped. We better take him over to the lower camp, Kentuckhe thinks he can ride all right if we lead along easy. We'll tie Jim Hum-phreys on your horse, I guess. He's over here about a hundred yards"

They traveled the half mile to the Bar Hook Bake Pan camp slowly, Lee Bishop and Kentucky walking and leading the horses. "How did this thing start?"

"Me and Jim was coming home," Billy Petersen sald, "past our south west well. The 88 had stuck up a kind of a tripod there, like as if to represent a well of their own, and it made us mad. We threw it down. Coming on about a mile farther we run into these four fellers, riding toward us. Three of 'em was together, and one laying back, when we met up. They come up in front of us and stopped. One of 'em said, 'Which one of you is boss here?' Jim Humphreys said, 'Who the h-l wants to know?' One of 'em says, I see you threw down our well tripod.' Jim says, 'And what if I did? Well, one word led to another, and finally one of 'em says, 'D-n you, Bishop-'"

"Bishop?" said Kentucky. "That's what he called him. - Jim didn't bother to tell him different. Then all of a sudden the guns was out."

"Who pulled the first iron?" Ken tucky asked. "Jim did," said Billy Petersen mournfully. "Jim, he fired the first make it.

shot. Only he missed. One of the 88 fellers made the quickest draw I ever see or heard tell of. His first shot put Jim out of business, I think. One of 'em took a throw at me, and the other two poured it into Jim as he went down. I grabbed out my gun and I threw a shot some place, but I don't know where, because right then my d-n pony blew up. He made two or three pitches and then he took and run wild with me for two, three hundred yards; I pulled his fool head right back in my lap, but he just run loco, star gazing. I got him turned around -I don't know where I was exactlywhen all of a sudden he somersaulted I forget what I was trying to do right

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Common Duty to Wage Warfare on House Fly

Effort to change the name of the common house fly to typhold fly is the motive behind a movement started by Dr. L. O. Howard, government

The name, house fly," is too tame. The fly is accepted as a nuisance, but not considered as the dangerous insect it is. Government health authorities have proved that the common flies that buzz about homes and kitchens carry bacteria which can infect human beings with at least a dozen diseases in addition to typhoid.

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