

Rimrock Trail

By J. ALLAN DUNN

Author of
"A Man to His Mate"
Etc.

Copyright, 1923, by J. Allan Dunn

CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

Sandy went to the door and hailed Sam and Mormon. They came to the office escorting Blake, whose fox-face moved from side to side with furtive eyes as if he smelled a trap.

"We want the list of the folks you unloaded Molly's stock to," said Sandy. Blake looked at his employer who sat glowering at his cigar end, licked his lips and said nothing.

"Tell him, you d—d fool!" granted Keith.

"The stubs are in the car at Hereford depot," said Blake. "In the safe."

"Money there, too? I suppose you cashed the checks?"

"I deposited them to my own account," said Keith. "Come on, let's get this over with since you are determined to throw away your own and your partners' good money, to say nothing of the girl's. She could bring suit against you, Bourke, with a good chance of winning."

He glanced hopefully at Mormon and Sam. They kept on grinning.

"Round up that cl-auffer, Sam, will you?" asked Sandy. "Tell him we're startin' fo' Hereford right off."

Kate Nicholson and Miranda Bailey were on the ranch-house veranda.

"Could I ask you to mail these letters, Mr. Keith? Two of Molly's and one of my own." Kate Nicholson advanced toward him, the letters in hand. With a spurt of fury Keith snatched at the letters and threw them on the ground.

"To h— with you!" he shouted, his face empurpled. "You're fired!" All of his polish stripped from him like peeling veneer, he appeared merely a coarse bully.

Sam came up the veranda in two jumps and a final leap that left him with his hands entwined in Keith's coat collar. He whirled that astounded person half around and slammed him up against the wall of the ranch-house, rumbled, gasping, with trembling hands that lifted before the menace of Sam's gun.

"I oughter shoot the tongue out of you befo' I put a slug through yore head," said Sam, standing in front of the promoter, tense as a jaguar coiled for a spring, his eyes glittering, his voice packed with venom. "You git down on yo' knees, you ring-tailed skunk, an' apologize to this lady. Crook yo' knees, you stinkin' polecat, an' crawl. I'll make you lick her shoes. Down with you or I'll send you straight to judgment!"

"No, Sam, Mr. Manning—it isn't necessary," protested Kate Nicholson. "Please . . ."

Sam looked at her cold-eyed.

"This is my party," he said. "I'll do him good. I'll let him off lickin' yo' shoes, he might slip the leather. But he'll get them letters he chucked away, git em on all-fours, like the sneakin', slinkin', double-crossin' coyote he is. Crook yo' knees first an' apologize!"

Sam fired a shot and the promoter tumbled galvanically as the bullet tore

face was rosy; both were embarrassed.

"Thank you, Mr. Manning," she said. "Please let him get up, and put away your pistol."

"Git up," said Sam, "an' go pick up them letters."

Keith gathered up the envelopes and presented them, with a bow, to the governess. He had recovered partial poise and his face was pale as wax, his eyes evil.

"I'll mail them, Miss Nicholson," said Sandy. "Let's go." He took Sam aside as the car swung round and up to the porch. "Sammy," Sandy's eyes twinkled, "I didn't sabel you an' Miss Nicholson was so well acquainted."

Same looked his partner in the eyes and used almost the same words for which he had just tamed Keith. But he said them with a smile.

"You go plumb to h—!"

Creel, president of the Hereford National bank, a banker keen at a bargain, shot out his underlip when Keith, with Sandy in attendance, tendered him the money for all shares of the Molly mine sold in Hereford, including his own.

"You say the mine has petered out?" he asked Keith, with palpable suspicion. Keith glanced swiftly at Sandy sitting across the table from him in the little directors' room back of the bank proper. Sandy sat sphinx-like. As if by accident, his hands were on his hips, the fingers resting on his gun butts.

"That is the news from my superintendent," said Keith. "I wish I could doubt it. Under the circumstances, consulting with Mr. Bourke, who represents the majority stock, we concluded there was no other action for us to take but to recall the shares, although the money had actually passed."

"Humph!" Keith's suavity did not appear, entirely to smooth down Creel's chagrin at losing what he had considered a good thing. He smelt a mouse somewhere. "There are only two reasons for repurchasing 'such stock,'" he said crisply. "The course you take is rarely honorable and suggests great credit. The second reason would be a strike of rich ore rather than a failure."

"I will guarantee the failure, Creel," said Sandy. "If, at any time, a strike is made in the Molly, I shall be glad to transfer to you personally the same amount of shares from my own holdin's. I'll put that in writin', if you prefer it."

"No," said Creel. "It ain't necessary." He glumly made the retransfer. Sandy visited Keith's accounts and took Keith's check for the balance, placing it to a personal account for Molly. The check was on the Hereford bank and it practically exhausted Keith's local resources.

Keith's powerful car made nothing of the few miles between Hereford and the Three Star and it was only mid-afternoon when they arrived. Molly and Donald Keith were still absent, there was no sign of Brandon.

Keith stayed in his car, smoking, ignoring the very existence of the ranch and its people. The afternoon wore on with the sun dropping gradually toward the last quarter of the day's march. At four o'clock one of the Three Star riders came in at a gallop, carrying double. Behind him, clinging tight, was Donald Keith, who, almost exhausted, his trim riding clothes snagged and soiled, his shining puttees scuffed and scratched. He staggered as he slid out of the saddle and clung to the cantle, head sunk on arms until Sandy took him by the arm. Keith sprang from his car and came over. Sam and Mormon hurried up.

"What's this?" demanded Keith angrily, suspicion rife in his voice.

"I picked him up three mile back, hoo-hoo!" He was headin' fo' Bitter Flats but he wanted the ranch," said the cowboy to Sandy, ignoring Keith. "We burned wind an' leather comin' in, seen' Jim Pimmsol an' some of his gang have made off with Miss Molly."

"Where'd this happen?" demanded Sandy. "Sam, go git Pronto fo' me an' saddle up."

"That's the h— of it," said the rider. "The pore d—n fool don't know. Plumb loco! Scared to death. Been wanderin' round sence afore noon."

Donald Keith sagged suddenly and Sandy picked the lad up in his arms, strode with him to the car and laid him on the cushions.

"Git some water," he ordered Keith. "We've got no flicker on the ranch."

Keith bent, opened a shallow drawer beneath the seat and produced a silver flask. He unscrewed the top and poured some liquor into it. Sandy raised the boy's head and lifted the whisky to his pallid lips; gray as his face where the flesh matched the powdery alkali that covered it.

The cordial trickled down and Donald's eyes opened. Almost immediately color came back into his cheeks and lips and he tried to sit up. Sandy helped him.

"Now, sonny," he said. "Tell us about it. Where did you leave Molly?"

"I don't know just where. I wasn't noticing just which way we rode. She did the leading. I don't know how I ever got back."

"Didn't she tell you where you were makin' fo'?"

"She didn't name it. It was a little lake in some canyon where Molly said there used to be beavers."

"Beaver Dam canyon," said Sandy excitedly. "You left here 'bout seven. How fast did you trail?"

"We walked the horses most of the time. It was all uphill. And I looked at my watch a little before it happened. It was a quarter of eleven. We saw some men ahead of us. Molly wondered who they could be. Then they disappeared. We were riding in a pass and two of them showed again, coming out of the trees ahead of us. One of them, on a big black horse, held up his hand."

"Jim Pimmsol!"

"Yes, Molly recognized him and spoke to him to get out of the trail. Grit was trailing us. Pimmsol wouldn't move. I heard more horses back of us and I turned to look. Two more men were coming up behind. Molly spurred Blaze on and cut at Pimmsol with her quirt. He grabbed her hand with his left. Grit sprang up at him and he got out his gun from the shoulder sling and shot him."

"Shot the dawg? Hit him?"

"Yes, in the leg. He fired at him again, but Grit got into the brush."

"Just what were you doin' all the time?" Sandy knew the lad was a tenderfoot, knew he would have been small use on such an occasion, but the thought of Grit rising to the rescue, falling back shot, brought the taunt.

"The two men behind told me to throw up my hands," said young Keith, his face reddening. "What could I do?"

"Nothin', son. You c'dn't have done a thing. Go on."

"Pimmsol twisted Molly's wrist so that the quirt fell to the ground. The man who was with him tossed his rope over her and they twisted it round her arms. I had the muzzle of a rifle poked into my ribs. They made me get off my horse. And they made me walk back along the trail. They fired bullets each side of me and laughed at me when I dodged." Donald's eyes were filled with tears of self-pity and the remembrance of his helpless rage. "I didn't know what to do. I couldn't rescue Molly without a horse. I only had a revolver against their rifles and I'm not much of a shot. I tried to get back here but it was hard to find the way. I was all in when your man found me."

"All right, my son. Keith, I'm goin' to borrow that flask of yores. Might need it."

He jumped from the car, flask in hand, and ran to the ranch house. Kate Nicholson met him as he entered.

"Has anything happened to Molly?" she gasped.

"That's what I'm goin' to find out," Sandy answered. "Mormon, git me my cartridge belt an' some extra shells fo' my rifle."

"You ain't takin' Sam?" asked Mormon, returning with the cartridge belt, Sandy's rifle and a box of shells.

"Sam ain't comin'," said Sandy, filling his rifle magazine and breech, stowing away extra clips. "I'm goin' in alone. Mo'n one 'ud be likely to spoil sign, Mormon, mo'n one is likely to advertise we're comin'. They're liable to leave a lookout. Pimmsol's clearin' out of the country an' I'm trailin' him clear through h— if I have to. Ef he's harmed Molly I'll stake him out with a green hide wrapped around him an' his eyelids sliced off. I'll sit in the shade an' watch him frizzle an' yell when the hide shrinks in the sun. This is my private play, Mormon. You an' Sam can back it up, but I'm handlin' the cards."

He left the room and they saw him covering the ground in a wolf trot to where Sam, astride his own favorite mount, held Pronto ready saddled. They saw Sam's protest, Sandy's vigorous overruling of it, and then Sandy was up-saddle and away at a brisklope with Sam gazing after him, consolately. Keith's car was unusable for the trip to Hereford, spurning the dust of the Three Star ranch forever—and not lamented.

Sandy, his eyes like the mica flakets that show in gray granite, his humorous mouth a stern line, little bunches of muscles at the junction of his jaws, held the pinto to a steadylope that ate up the ground, drifting straight and fast across country for the opening in the mesa that he had marked as the short-cut to the spot described by Donald Keith. Every now and then he talked his thoughts aloud, as the lonely rider will and, if the pinto could not understand, he listened with pricked ears.

"Grit must have been hurt pretty bad, I'm afraid. Wonder who the three were with Pimmsol? They've gone to the Hideout an' we got to find it, I'll hawss. Some job, I reckon. But Pimmsol's goin' to be mighty sorry fo' himsef' befo' long."

Sandy was a crucible filled with glowing white fury. Thoughts of what Pimmsol might achieve in insult and injury to Molly could not be kept out of his mind and they but added fuel. It was not Sandy Bourke of the Three Star, riding his favorite pinto, but a desperate man on a horse infected with the same grim determination, a man with a face that, despite the fiery heat within, blazing from his eyes, would have chilled the blood of any meeting him.

The place it had taken Molly and young Keith nearly three hours to reach in leisurely fashion, Sandy gained in one, splashing through the shallows of Willow creeks at the ford below the big bend and giving Pronto the chance to cool his fetlocks and rinse out his mouth in the cold water.

Ahead lay the chinquapine ravine that led around into Beaver Dam canyon, in which Molly and the boy had been attacked. Sandy rode on down the narrow trail. Once in a while he broke a branch and left it swinging as a guide to Sam when he should follow with the riders from the ranch.

The tracks of Molly's Blaze and the horse Donald had been riding were plain as print to Sandy. He even noticed the slot of Grit's pads here and there in softer soil.

The place of the struggle was plain. The brush was trampled. To one side of the trail there was a clot of blood, almost black, with flies buzzing attention to it. It must have come from Grit.

"I'll score one fo' you, Grit, while I'm about it," muttered Sandy as he dismounted and carefully surveyed the sign. Six horses had gone on, one led.

Sandy swung up the heavy stirrups and tied them above the saddle seat. He stripped the reins from the bridle and pulled down Pronto's wise head.

"Hit the back-trail fo' home, I'll hawss," he said. "If I need me a mount to git back I'll borrow one. I got to go belly-trailin' pritty soon."

He gave the pinto a cautious slap on the flank and Pronto started off down the trail. So far Sandy believed he had not been seen. If he had, a rifle-shot would have been the first warning.

A buzzard hung in the early evening sky, cireling high and then suddenly dropping in a swoop.

"Looks like Grit's cashed in," thought Sandy. "That bird was a late comer, at that."

But it was not Grit.

The ravine curved, forked. One way led to Beaver Dam lake, the other rifted deep through rocky outcrop, leading to the Waterline range. The boundary fence crossed it. Two posts had been broken out, the wire flattened. Through the gap led the sign that Sandy followed. The clouds were assembling for sunset overhead, the moon just topped the eastern cliffs, beginning to send out a measure of reflected light. A beam struck a little cylinder, the emptied shell of a thirty-thirty rifle. There was another close by. And scanty soil was marked with more hoof. Sandy halted, wondering the key to the puzzle. Did it mean a quarrel between Pimmsol's men? Altogether he figured there had been a dozen horses over the ground. It was only a swift guess but he knew it close to the mark. Had Pimmsol been joined or attacked? And . . . ?

Walking cat-footed, he made no sound but suddenly three buzzards rose on heavy wings and he went swiftly to where they had been squatting. A dead man lay up against the cliff, a saddle blaaket thrown over his face. This had held off the carion birds. The body was limp and still warm, it had been a corpse only a short time. Sandy took off the blaaket.

It was Wyatt! A bullet had made a small hole in his skull by the right temple and crashed out through it, back of his head in a bloody gash!

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Sandy was a crucible filled with glowing white fury. Thoughts of what Pimmsol might achieve in insult and injury to Molly could not be kept out of his mind and they but added fuel. It was not Sandy Bourke of the Three Star, riding his favorite pinto, but a desperate man on a horse infected with the same grim determination, a man with a face that, despite the fiery heat within, blazing from his eyes, would have chilled the blood of any meeting him.

The place it had taken Molly and young Keith nearly three hours to reach in leisurely fashion, Sandy gained in one, splashing through the shallows of Willow creeks at the ford below the big bend and giving Pronto the chance to cool his fetlocks and rinse out his mouth in the cold water.

Ahead lay the chinquapine ravine that led around into Beaver Dam canyon, in which Molly and the boy had been attacked. Sandy rode on down the narrow trail. Once in a while he broke a branch and left it swinging as a guide to Sam when he should follow with the riders from the ranch.



Sandy Was a Crucible Filled With Glowing White Fury.

horse Donald had been riding were plain as print to Sandy. He even noticed the slot of Grit's pads here and there in softer soil.

The place of the struggle was plain. The brush was trampled. To one side of the trail there was a clot of blood, almost black, with flies buzzing attention to it. It must have come from Grit.

"I'll score one fo' you, Grit, while I'm about it," muttered Sandy as he dismounted and carefully surveyed the sign. Six horses had gone on, one led.

Sandy swung up the heavy stirrups and tied them above the saddle seat. He stripped the reins from the bridle and pulled down Pronto's wise head.

"Hit the back-trail fo' home, I'll hawss," he said. "If I need me a mount to git back I'll borrow one. I got to go belly-trailin' pritty soon."

He gave the pinto a cautious slap on the flank and Pronto started off down the trail. So far Sandy believed he had not been seen. If he had, a rifle-shot would have been the first warning.

A buzzard hung in the early evening sky, cireling high and then suddenly dropping in a swoop.

"Looks like Grit's cashed in," thought Sandy. "That bird was a late comer, at that."

But it was not Grit.

NURSE FINDS A PERFECT REMEDY

"From my long experience as a nurse I do not hesitate to say that I consider Tanlac Nature's most perfect remedy," recently declared Mrs. L. A. Borden, 425 Pontius Ave., Seattle, Wash. Mrs. Borden is a graduate of the National Temperance Hospital, Chicago, and her wide experience in caring for the sick lends particular emphasis to her statement.

"I have used Tanlac exclusively for seven years in the treatment of my charity patients," continued Mrs. Borden, "and my experience has been that, for keeping the stomach, liver, kidneys and bowels functioning properly and for toning up the system in general, Tanlac has no equal. Recently I had a woman patient who could not even keep water on her stomach for fifteen minutes. Six bottles of Tanlac fixed her up so she could eat absolutely anything. Another patient, a man, seemed unable to digest any food at all. Three bottles of Tanlac put him in such fine shape he went back to work. These two cases are typical. My confidence in Tanlac is unlimited."

Tanlac is sold by all good druggists. Take no substitute. Over 40 million bottles sold.—Advertisement.

Ruinous Measure.
"Does she weigh her words?"
"Yes, but if she ran a grocery store on the same basis she'd soon be bankrupt."

BABIES CRY FOR "CASTORIA"

Prepared Especially for Infants and Children of All Ages

Mother! Fletcher's Castoria has been in use for over 30 years as a pleasant, harmless substitute for Castor Oil, Purgative, Teething Drops and Soothing Syrup. Contains no narcotics. Proven directions are on each package. Physicians recommend it. The genuine bears signature of

Chas. H. Fletcher.

Different.
The comedy cinema actor stopped a man he knew. "Look here," he began. "I understand you said last night that I have no sense of humor. A remark of that kind, made publicly, in the presence of other people, is very damaging to a man in my position, and—"

"Hold on!" interrupted the other. "I never said you had no sense of humor. What I said was that you had no sense of honor."

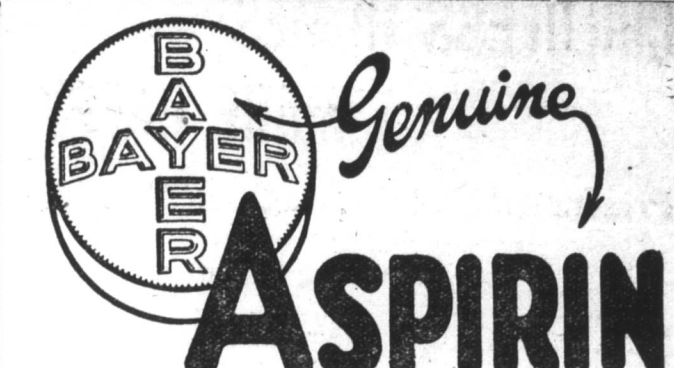
"Ah!" beamed the actor. "I thought there must be some mistake. I felt certain you would never run down a pal behind his back."

Had a Season Ticket.
Two brothers had lived in a village near Aberdeen and had traveled to town to business every day by train. One long ago one of them died, and the other decided to have the coffin containing the body conveyed by train to the city.

He sought the advice of the station-master, and was told that he would have to procure a special ticket.

"A special ticket," he gasped in dismay. "What would I do that for? His season ticket hasn't expired yet!"

Literally Speaking.
"Does Madge approve of cosmetics?"
"She seems to lend countenance to them, all right."



SAY "BAYER" when you buy. Insist! Proved safe by millions and prescribed by physicians for Colds, Headache, Neuritis, Lumbago, Pain, Toothache, Neuralgia, Rheumatism.

Two pleasant ways to relieve a cough. Take your choice and suit your taste. S-B or Menthol flavor. A sure relief for coughs, colds and hoarseness. Put one in your mouth at bedtime. Always keep a box on hand.

SMITH BROTHERS S.B. COUGH DROPS MENTHOL (orange colored box) Famous since 1847

Lives of some statesmen remind us that it is sometimes better to be obscure.

PARKER'S HAIR BALSAM. Restores Color and Beauty to Gray and Faded Hair. 6c. and \$1.00 at Druggists. Branches: New York, Philadelphia, N. Y.

HINDERCORNS. Removes Corns, Calluses, etc. from all parts, ensures comfort to the feet, makes walking easy. 10c. by mail or at Druggists. Hines Chemical Works, Philadelphia, N. Y.

SWAMP-ROOT FOR KIDNEY AILMENTS

There is only one medicine that really stands out pre-eminent as a medicine for curable ailments of the kidneys, liver and bladder.

Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root stands the highest for the reason that it has proven to be just the remedy needed in thousands upon thousands of distressing cases. Swamp-Root makes friends quickly because its mild and immediate effect is soon realized in most cases. It is a gentle, healing vegetable compound.

Start treatment at once. Sold at all drug stores in bottles of two sizes, medium and large.

Edible Drinking Cup Appears.

With the increase in popularity of water ices among patrons of refreshment pushcarts, ball park caterers and other vendors the edible drinking cup is appearing. It is of graham cracker ingredients and some are lined with chocolate.

Early in the season water ices were served in paper or paraffin cups. As these were not consumable they created a problem of litter. The new kind of cup, like the cone for ice cream, provides a cake for the water ices. It is also finding a field as a container and accompaniment for soft drinks.—New York Sun and Globe.

What! Another?

Actress—I'm delighted to see you again. Allow me to introduce my husband.

Manager—Ah! Always a pleasure to meet any husband of yours.

Huh!

"What have you there?"

"I think this will make a hit with the ladies—a form-fitting porous plaster."

Sure to Come Back.

"Sir Basil Zaharoff, who has succeeded the Blanc family as the principal owner of Monte Carlo," said a Chicagoan, "took me one night through the gorgeous gambling rooms of the Monte Carlo casino. We halted a while at a roulette table. An Englishman was winning tremendously there. Finally the man cashed in.

"Goodness!" I said. "What a haul that lucky bird has made!"

"Oh," said Sir Basil, "that's nothing. It makes no difference to the Casino. It's just a bit of our money sleeping out for the night."—Chicago Daily News.

Trade Revival Vital to U. S.

Far away, but eventually affects your pocketbook: Great Britain, in the first six months of 1923, exported more than three times as much coal as in the first six months of last year. Also, correspondingly, nearly four times as much iron and steel, eight times as much cotton goods and nearly six times as much woolsens.

An English revival of trade is important to us because her ability to pay what she owes Uncle Sam depends largely on her export markets.

In the bright lexicon of a boarding house the ax is mightier than the curving knife.

A Simple Guide to Proper Food Selection

Nourishment— Grape-Nuts with cream or good milk contains every element necessary for perfect nutrition.

Digestibility— Grape-Nuts is partially pre-digested by 20 hours' baking. It is easily assimilated by child or adult.

Flavor— Grape-Nuts, made of wheat and barley, is sweet with natural sugar self-developed from the grain in the making. It has a delightful, nut-like flavor.

Character— Grape-Nuts is real food—the kind you can depend upon for strength and energy. Its crisp granules invite thorough mastication, thus helping to keep the teeth and gums healthy.

Economy— Grape-Nuts is so compact that a package contains many servings; and each serving provides unusual nourishment. A portion for the cereal part of a meal costs about one cent.

Grape-Nuts FOR HEALTH "There's a Reason" Made by Postum Cereal Company, Inc., Battle Creek, Michigan.



Sam Fired a Shot and the Promoter Jumped Galvanically as the Bullet Tore Through the Planking.

through the planking of the ranch house between his trembling knees.

"I regret, Miss Nicholson," he commenced huskily, "that I let my temper get the better of me. I was greatly upset. In the matter of your services I was—doubtless hasty. It can be arranged."

He shrunk at the tap of Sam's gun on his shoulder, willing to his knees.

"She w'dn't work fo' you fo' the time it takes a rabbit to dodge a rattler," said Sam. "She never did work fo' you. It was Molly's money paid her. Kate's goin' to stay right here as long as she chooses an' I . . ."

Catching Kate Nicholson's gaze, the admiring look of a woman who has never before been championed, conscious of the fact that he had blurted out her Christian name and disclosed the secret of that touch of intimacy between them, Sam grew crimson through his tan. Kate Nicholson's