

# ROBBERS' ROOST

by Zane Grey

Copyright.—WNU Service.

### SYNOPSIS

Jim Wall, young cowpuncher from Wyoming, seeks a new field in Utah. He meets Hank Hays, who tells him he is working for an Englishman, Herrick. Hays and others are plotting to steal their employer's cattle and money. With Hays, Jim Wall goes to Herrick's ranch. Hays and his lieutenants drive off a bunch of cattle. Heeseeman is Hays' rival among the cattle rustlers. Jim is sent to meet Miss Herrick. Hays betrays unusual interest in the girl's coming. Wall finds himself falling in love with Helen, and he fears Hays has designs on the girl. Jim coaches her in riding western style, and finally kisses her. She is angry and dismises him, but relents and asks him not to leave the ranch. Hays' men return from the drive, having sold the cattle and brought back the money. A quick getaway is imperative. Hays tells them to go on ahead, that he will join them. He comes, with Helen Herrick—a captive. Hays explains that he stole Helen for ransom. Realizing that Helen will be worth a lot of money, Hays tells Heeseeman's clutches. Jim Wall does nothing. Heeseeman's riders come in pursuit. Hays leads the gang into a canyon retreat. The Robbers' Roost. Later, one of Hays' gang, wounded with Heeseeman, tells Jim that Hays has held out some of the money he stole from Herrick. In the "roost" Jim keeps a watchful eye on Helen. Heeseeman's riders are seen approaching and the desperadoes prepare to fight.

### CHAPTER IX—Continued

"I should shiver she did. Struck Hays' hair-trigger gun—cocked—right into my belly, an' says: 'Will you tie this villain—an' swear by your honor not to release him or allow any of these other men to do so—or will you have me shoot you?'"

"How'd she get that gun?"

"Wal, she snatched it quicker'n lightning, that's how. An' when she cocked it with both hands it went off bang! The bullet went between Hank's legs. Ticked him. You can see the hole in his pants. Scared? My Gawd, you never see a man so scared. That gurl, cool as a cucumber, cocked the gun again, an' held Hays up—then all of us."

"We was sittin' at the table. She made us all stand, hands high, an' then she performed that little trick with Hank's gun agin my gizzard. Jim, I hope to die if I didn't go cold an' stiff. But I promised on my word of honor—as a robber—that I'd tie Hank up, an' make the other fellers play square. It was so funny, too, that I near bust. Hays, soon as he was helpless, got over his scare, an' then was he mad! I reckon no one on this earth saw a madder man. He cussed so terrible that she made me gag him."

"Well, I'll be—blowed!" gasped Jim.

"No wonder. We was wuss. We'd had breakfast, an' Hank was tryin' to face us fellers. I'll say he came clean, Jim. He divided all the money he got from Herrick an' his sister, an' the gold things an' diamonds. 'Fellers,' he said, 'I could lie an' say I meant to give this to you later. But I'm not built that way. I double-crossed you all—first time in my life. I meant to keep it all, an' the ransom, fer the girl. But now there won't be no ransom, for I'm not goin' to give her up. She's mine, an' I can do as I want, an' if any of you don't like it you can make your kick now.'"

"Wal, we was so plumb flabbergasted that we didn't see the gurl, who came close on the sun side of Happy's shelter. She heard the whole d—n show. . . . Jim, I wish you could have seen her when she stepped up to Hank. I don't know what did it—mebbe her eyes—but he shored wilted. It was then she snatched his gun."

"So that's the deal!" ejaculated Jim.

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't ask me. I gave my word an' I'll keep it. For that matter the rest of our outfit atter the gurl, ransom or no ransom."

Suddenly Jim awoke out of his stupefaction to remember the approach of Heeseeman.

"Smoky, I know what you're all going to do, and that's fight," he flashed, curtly. "Heeseeman's outfit is coming. I sighted them perhaps three miles. Traveling slow, but sure. We've got no time to pack an' get away. We've got to find the best place to stand an' fight, an' pack our stuff into it pronto."

"Heeseeman!" cried Smoky, coolly.

"So it's come. I reckoned on that. Git busy, men."

Jim strode under the shelter to face Miss Herrick. She had heard, for she was white.

"We're all but surprised by Heeseeman's outfit," he said, abruptly. "We must fight. You will be worse off if you fall into their hands. I'm sorry I must release Hays. We need him."

"Too late!" she exclaimed.

"Pack your things quickly and hurry over to the cave on this side." Then Jim picked up Hays' gun from the table and ran out. First he removed the gag, then in terse terms he stated the situation. Next he released the

robber from his painful fix and nanded him the gun.

"Heeseeman, hub! Wal, so be it!" Hays said, facing Jim with an air of finality that intimidated relief.

"How far are they away?" he asked.

"Two miles."

"We've got half an hour—mebbe. Did you think to look for the hosses?"

"Eight horses in the valley. Others not in sight."

"Fine scout you air. How come you didn't spy them soon enough fer us to rustle out of hyar?"

"I couldn't have seen them half a mile sooner," snapped Jim. "They came out from behind a bank."

"Hell's fire! Tell that to me? You was sleepin'."

"You're a liar," flashed Jim, leaping clear of the others. "Open your trap to me again like that!"

"Say, it's you who'll shet his trap," replied Hays, stridently. "Or you'll git a dose of the medicine I gave Brad Lincoln."

"Not from you—you yellow dog of a woman thief!"

Smoky Slocum ran out in time to get in front of Jim.

"Hyar! Hyar!" he called, piercingly. "Is this a time fer us to fight each other? Cool down, Jim. Make allowances fer Hays. He's wuss'n drunk."

"I don't care a d—n if there's ten outfits on our trail. He can't talk to me that way. . . . And, Smoky, I reckon you're presuming on friendship."

"Shore I am," returned Slocum, hurriedly. "I'll not do it again, Jim. Hays is what you called him. But leave your dispute till we settle with Heeseeman."

"All right. You're talking sense," replied Jim. He had been quick to grasp the opening made by Hays. "There must be ten riders in Heeseeman's outfit."

"Wal, that suits me," rejoined the robber, harshly.

"Now think fast," snapped Smoky. Hays pulled himself together. "Mac, you an' Jeff run to fetch what hosses you can find quick. . . . Jack, you an'

Presently a white puff of smoke showed above the ragged rim. Spang! The fight was on. One of Hays' men—Bridges—let out a hoarse bawl and swayed over, almost losing his balance. Jim looked no more at him, but concentrated his gaze on the rim. Another puff of white! Something dark—a man's slouch hat—bobbed up. Jim's rifle, already raised, answered a trifle—cracked. The hat went flying.

The horses came over the bench, frightened, but not stampeding, and Mac drove them into the corral. This was around the corner from the range of the sharpshooter of the rim. Bridges, reeling on the horse, followed Mac, who ran out of the corral to catch him as he fell. Then, as they came along close to the wall, Hays arrived from the other direction.

"Heeseeman—with his outfit—nine in all," he heaved. "They're scatterin' to surround the roost. . . . But they can't cross—below us—an' across there it's—out of range. . . . We're all right."

A bullet thudded into the wall, followed by the report of a rifle.

"Duck back! That was from somewhere else," shouted Hays.

They dove twenty feet farther back. Here they were apparently safe, except from the grassy ridge of the oval in front, which it was unlikely any sharpshooters could reach in daylight.

After a careful study Jim crept into the brush, stirred by a renewal of firing from the west rim. Whips of white cloud, thinning on the light wind, located the positions of the shooters. First Jim peered through the growth of brush directly in front.

Almost at once he caught a movement of a dark object through a crevice in the rim. The distance was great for accurate shooting at so small a target. But with a rest he drew a coarse, steady aim and fired once.

The object flopped over. A shrill cry, unmistakable to any man used to gunplay, rent the air. Jim knew he had reached one of the Heeseeman gang, to disable him, if no more. Next instant a raking fire swept the brush on both sides of Jim. He dropped down into the cave.

Smoky stood there, in the act of climbing.

"They near got me," rang out Jim. "I hit one of them way over where they shot at Bridges. There's a bunch of them hid on that cliff to the right of the outlet, you know, where Jeff went up to scout."

"Jim, they got us located," replied Slocum, gravely.

"Sure. But so long as they can't line on us in here—"

"They can move all around. An' pretty soon Heeseeman will figger that men behind the high center in front can shoot straight in hyar."

"They're below the ridge now. Look sharp, Smoky, or they might get a couple of shots in first."

"Wal, if they do I hope both bullets lodze in Hank's gizzard."

"My sentiments exactly. . . . Smoky, I saw something shine. Tip of a rifle. Right—to the right. . . . Ah!"

"Take the first feller, Jim. . . . One—two—three."

The rifles cracked in unison. Jim's mark sprang convulsively up, and plunged down to roll and weave out of sight. The man Smoky had shot at sank flat and lay still. Next moment a volley banged from the cliff and a storm of bullets swept hissing and spanging uncomfortably close.

Jim slid and leaped to the floor of the cave below. Smoky, by lying down, lowered the rifles to him, and then came scrambling after.

Hays had slouched back to them, followed by Happy.

"Jack, gimme Jeff's gun an' belt," Hays said, and receiving them, he buckled them over his own. Next he opened his pack to take out a box of rifle shells, which he broke open & drop the contents in his coat pocket on the left side. After that he opened his shirt to strip off a broad, black money belt. This was what had made him bulge so and give the impression of stoutness, when in fact he was lean. He hung this belt over a projecting point of wall.

"In case I don't git back," he added. "An' there's a bundle of chicken-feed change in my pack."

There was something gloomy and splendid about him then. Fear of God, or man, or death was not in him. Rifle in hand he crept to the corner on the left and boldly exposed himself, drawing a volley of shots from two quarters. Then he disappeared.

"What's Hays' idea?" asked Jim.

"He must know a way to sneak around on them."

A metallic, spanging sound accompanied rather than followed by a shot, then a sudden thud right at hand choked further speech. Happy Jack had been cut short in one of his low whistles. He swayed a second upright, then uttering an awful groan, he fell. Smoky leaped to him, bent over.

"Dead! Hit in the temple. Where'd that bullet come from?"

"It glanced from a rock. I know the sound."

"Jim, the only safe place from that—is hyar, huggin' this corner," declared Smoky. "An' there ain't room enough fer the two of us."

"Keep it, Smoky. I'm not going to get hit. This is my day. I feel something in my bones, but it's not death."

"Huh. I feel somethin' too—clear to my marrow—an' it's sickish an' cold. . . . Jim, I'll sneak out an' crawl back on them. That's my idea. I don't have wrong ideas at this stage of a fight."

That was the last he spoke to Jim. Muttering to himself he laid a huge roll of bills under the belt Hays had deposited on the little shelf of rock. Then he vanished.

CHAPTER X

Smoky came panting in with Hays' pack, and started off again.

"That's enough, Smoky," called Jim. Slocum returned. "Nothin' left—'cept Hank's bed," he panted. "I—couldn't—locate that."

"Listen!"

"What do you hear?"

"Hosses."

"Jim, keep your eye peeled on the cliff," said Smoky, and stole forward under cover of the brush.

CHAPTER IX—Continued

"I should shiver she did. Struck Hays' hair-trigger gun—cocked—right into my belly, an' says: 'Will you tie this villain—an' swear by your honor not to release him or allow any of these other men to do so—or will you have me shoot you?'"

"How'd she get that gun?"

"Wal, she snatched it quicker'n lightning, that's how. An' when she cocked it with both hands it went off bang! The bullet went between Hank's legs. Ticked him. You can see the hole in his pants. Scared? My Gawd, you never see a man so scared. That gurl, cool as a cucumber, cocked the gun again, an' held Hays up—then all of us."

"We was sittin' at the table. She made us all stand, hands high, an' then she performed that little trick with Hank's gun agin my gizzard. Jim, I hope to die if I didn't go cold an' stiff. But I promised on my word of honor—as a robber—that I'd tie Hank up, an' make the other fellers play square. It was so funny, too, that I near bust. Hays, soon as he was helpless, got over his scare, an' then was he mad! I reckon no one on this earth saw a madder man. He cussed so terrible that she made me gag him."

"Well, I'll be—blowed!" gasped Jim.

"No wonder. We was wuss. We'd had breakfast, an' Hank was tryin' to face us fellers. I'll say he came clean, Jim. He divided all the money he got from Herrick an' his sister, an' the gold things an' diamonds. 'Fellers,' he said, 'I could lie an' say I meant to give this to you later. But I'm not built that way. I double-crossed you all—first time in my life. I meant to keep it all, an' the ransom, fer the girl. But now there won't be no ransom, for I'm not goin' to give her up. She's mine, an' I can do as I want, an' if any of you don't like it you can make your kick now.'"

"Wal, we was so plumb flabbergasted that we didn't see the gurl, who came close on the sun side of Happy's shelter. She heard the whole d—n show. . . . Jim, I wish you could have seen her when she stepped up to Hank. I don't know what did it—mebbe her eyes—but he shored wilted. It was then she snatched his gun."

"So that's the deal!" ejaculated Jim.

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't ask me. I gave my word an' I'll keep it. For that matter the rest of our outfit atter the gurl, ransom or no ransom."

Suddenly Jim awoke out of his stupefaction to remember the approach of Heeseeman.

"Smoky, I know what you're all going to do, and that's fight," he flashed, curtly. "Heeseeman's outfit is coming. I sighted them perhaps three miles. Traveling slow, but sure. We've got no time to pack an' get away. We've got to find the best place to stand an' fight, an' pack our stuff into it pronto."

"Heeseeman!" cried Smoky, coolly.

"So it's come. I reckoned on that. Git busy, men."

Jim strode under the shelter to face Miss Herrick. She had heard, for she was white.

"We're all but surprised by Heeseeman's outfit," he said, abruptly. "We must fight. You will be worse off if you fall into their hands. I'm sorry I must release Hays. We need him."

"Too late!" she exclaimed.

"Pack your things quickly and hurry over to the cave on this side." Then Jim picked up Hays' gun from the table and ran out. First he removed the gag, then in terse terms he stated the situation. Next he released the

CHAPTER IX—Continued

"I should shiver she did. Struck Hays' hair-trigger gun—cocked—right into my belly, an' says: 'Will you tie this villain—an' swear by your honor not to release him or allow any of these other men to do so—or will you have me shoot you?'"

"How'd she get that gun?"

"Wal, she snatched it quicker'n lightning, that's how. An' when she cocked it with both hands it went off bang! The bullet went between Hank's legs. Ticked him. You can see the hole in his pants. Scared? My Gawd, you never see a man so scared. That gurl, cool as a cucumber, cocked the gun again, an' held Hays up—then all of us."

"We was sittin' at the table. She made us all stand, hands high, an' then she performed that little trick with Hank's gun agin my gizzard. Jim, I hope to die if I didn't go cold an' stiff. But I promised on my word of honor—as a robber—that I'd tie Hank up, an' make the other fellers play square. It was so funny, too, that I near bust. Hays, soon as he was helpless, got over his scare, an' then was he mad! I reckon no one on this earth saw a madder man. He cussed so terrible that she made me gag him."

"Well, I'll be—blowed!" gasped Jim.

"No wonder. We was wuss. We'd had breakfast, an' Hank was tryin' to face us fellers. I'll say he came clean, Jim. He divided all the money he got from Herrick an' his sister, an' the gold things an' diamonds. 'Fellers,' he said, 'I could lie an' say I meant to give this to you later. But I'm not built that way. I double-crossed you all—first time in my life. I meant to keep it all, an' the ransom, fer the girl. But now there won't be no ransom, for I'm not goin' to give her up. She's mine, an' I can do as I want, an' if any of you don't like it you can make your kick now.'"

"Wal, we was so plumb flabbergasted that we didn't see the gurl, who came close on the sun side of Happy's shelter. She heard the whole d—n show. . . . Jim, I wish you could have seen her when she stepped up to Hank. I don't know what did it—mebbe her eyes—but he shored wilted. It was then she snatched his gun."

"So that's the deal!" ejaculated Jim.

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't ask me. I gave my word an' I'll keep it. For that matter the rest of our outfit atter the gurl, ransom or no ransom."

Suddenly Jim awoke out of his stupefaction to remember the approach of Heeseeman.

"Smoky, I know what you're all going to do, and that's fight," he flashed, curtly. "Heeseeman's outfit is coming. I sighted them perhaps three miles. Traveling slow, but sure. We've got no time to pack an' get away. We've got to find the best place to stand an' fight, an' pack our stuff into it pronto."

"Heeseeman!" cried Smoky, coolly.

"So it's come. I reckoned on that. Git busy, men."

Jim strode under the shelter to face Miss Herrick. She had heard, for she was white.

"We're all but surprised by Heeseeman's outfit," he said, abruptly. "We must fight. You will be worse off if you fall into their hands. I'm sorry I must release Hays. We need him."

"Too late!" she exclaimed.

"Pack your things quickly and hurry over to the cave on this side." Then Jim picked up Hays' gun from the table and ran out. First he removed the gag, then in terse terms he stated the situation. Next he released the

robber from his painful fix and nanded him the gun.

"Heeseeman, hub! Wal, so be it!" Hays said, facing Jim with an air of finality that intimidated relief.

"How far are they away?" he asked.

"Two miles."

"We've got half an hour—mebbe. Did you think to look for the hosses?"

"Eight horses in the valley. Others not in sight."

"Fine scout you air. How come you didn't spy them soon enough fer us to rustle out of hyar?"

"I couldn't have seen them half a mile sooner," snapped Jim. "They came out from behind a bank."

"Hell's fire! Tell that to me? You was sleepin'."

"You're a liar," flashed Jim, leaping clear of the others. "Open your trap to me again like that!"

"Say, it's you who'll shet his trap," replied Hays, stridently. "Or you'll git a dose of the medicine I gave Brad Lincoln."

"Not from you—you yellow dog of a woman thief!"

Smoky Slocum ran out in time to get in front of Jim.

"Hyar! Hyar!" he called, piercingly. "Is this a time fer us to fight each other? Cool down, Jim. Make allowances fer Hays. He's wuss'n drunk."

"I don't care a d—n if there's ten outfits on our trail. He can't talk to me that way. . . . And, Smoky, I reckon you're presuming on friendship."

"Shore I am," returned Slocum, hurriedly. "I'll not do it again, Jim. Hays is what you called him. But leave your dispute till we settle with Heeseeman."

"All right. You're talking sense," replied Jim. He had been quick to grasp the opening made by Hays. "There must be ten riders in Heeseeman's outfit."

"Wal, that suits me," rejoined the robber, harshly.

"Now think fast," snapped Smoky. Hays pulled himself together. "Mac, you an' Jeff run to fetch what hosses you can find quick. . . . Jack, you an'

Presently a white puff of smoke showed above the ragged rim. Spang! The fight was on. One of Hays' men—Bridges—let out a hoarse bawl and swayed over, almost losing his balance. Jim looked no more at him, but concentrated his gaze on the rim. Another puff of white! Something dark—a man's slouch hat—bobbed up. Jim's rifle, already raised, answered a trifle—cracked. The hat went flying.

The horses came over the bench, frightened, but not stampeding, and Mac drove them into the corral. This was around the corner from the range of the sharpshooter of the rim. Bridges, reeling on the horse, followed Mac, who ran out of the corral to catch him as he fell. Then, as they came along close to the wall, Hays arrived from the other direction.

"Heeseeman—with his outfit—nine in all," he heaved. "They're scatterin' to surround the roost. . . . But they can't cross—below us—an' across there it's—out of range. . . . We're all right."

A bullet thudded into the wall, followed by the report of a rifle.

"Duck back! That was from somewhere else," shouted Hays.

They dove twenty feet farther back. Here they were apparently safe, except from the grassy ridge of the oval in front, which it was unlikely any sharpshooters could reach in daylight.

After a careful study Jim crept into the brush, stirred by a renewal of firing from the west rim. Whips of white cloud, thinning on the light wind, located the positions of the shooters. First Jim peered through the growth of brush directly in front.

Almost at once he caught a movement of a dark object through a crevice in the rim. The distance was great for accurate shooting at so small a target. But with a rest he drew a coarse, steady aim and fired once.

The object flopped over. A shrill cry, unmistakable to any man used to gunplay, rent the air. Jim knew he had reached one of the Heeseeman gang, to disable him, if no more. Next instant a raking fire swept the brush on both sides of Jim. He dropped down into the cave.

Smoky stood there, in the act of climbing.

"They near got me," rang out Jim. "I hit one of them way over where they shot at Bridges. There's a bunch of them hid on that cliff to the right of the outlet, you know, where Jeff went up to scout."

"Jim, they got us located," replied Slocum, gravely.

"Sure. But so long as they can't line on us in here—"

"They can move all around. An' pretty soon Heeseeman will figger that men behind the high center in front can shoot straight in hyar."

"They're below the ridge now. Look sharp, Smoky, or they might get a couple of shots in first."

"Wal, if they do I hope both bullets lodze in Hank's gizzard."

"My sentiments exactly. . . . Smoky, I saw something shine. Tip of a rifle. Right—to the right. . . . Ah!"

"Take the first feller, Jim. . . . One—two—three."

The rifles cracked in unison. Jim's mark sprang convulsively up, and plunged down to roll and weave out of sight. The man Smoky had shot at sank flat and lay still. Next moment a volley banged from the cliff and a storm of bullets swept hissing and spanging uncomfortably close.

Jim slid and leaped to the floor of the cave below. Smoky, by lying down, lowered the rifles to him, and then came scrambling after.

Hays had slouched back to them, followed by Happy.

"Jack, gimme Jeff's gun an' belt," Hays said, and receiving them, he buckled them over his own. Next he opened his pack to take out a box of rifle shells, which he broke open & drop the contents in his coat pocket on the left side. After that he opened his shirt to strip off a broad, black money belt. This was what had made him bulge so and give the impression of stoutness, when in fact he was lean. He hung this belt over a projecting point of wall.

"In case I don't git back," he added. "An' there's a bundle of chicken-feed change in my pack."

There was something gloomy and splendid about him then. Fear of God, or man, or death was not in him. Rifle in hand he crept to the corner on the left and boldly exposed himself, drawing a volley of shots from two quarters. Then he disappeared.

"What's Hays' idea?" asked Jim.

"He must know a way to sneak around on them."

A metallic, spanging sound accompanied rather than followed by a shot, then a sudden thud right at hand choked further speech. Happy Jack had been cut short in one of his low whistles. He swayed a second upright, then uttering an awful groan, he fell. Smoky leaped to him, bent over.

"Dead! Hit in the temple. Where'd that bullet come from?"

"It glanced from a rock. I know the sound."

"Jim, the only safe place from that—is hyar, huggin' this corner," declared Smoky. "An' there ain't room enough fer the two of us."

"Keep it, Smoky. I'm not going to get hit. This is my day. I feel something in my bones, but it's not death."

"Huh. I feel somethin' too—clear to my marrow—an' it's sickish an' cold. . . . Jim, I'll sneak out an' crawl back on them. That's my idea. I don't have wrong ideas at this stage of a fight."

That was the last he spoke to Jim. Muttering to himself he laid a huge roll of bills under the belt Hays had deposited on the little shelf of rock. Then he vanished.

CHAPTER X

Smoky came panting in with Hays' pack, and started off again.

"That's enough, Smoky," called Jim. Slocum returned. "Nothin' left—'cept Hank's bed," he panted. "I—couldn't—locate that."

"Listen!"

"What do you hear?"

"Hosses."

"Jim, keep your eye peeled on the cliff," said Smoky, and stole forward under cover of the brush.

CHAPTER IX—Continued

"I should shiver she did. Struck Hays' hair-trigger gun—cocked—right into my belly, an' says: 'Will you tie this villain—an' swear by your honor not to release him or allow any of these other men to do so—or will you have me shoot you?'"

"How'd she get that gun?"

"Wal, she snatched it quicker'n lightning, that's how. An' when she cocked it with both hands it went off bang! The bullet went between Hank's legs. Ticked him. You can see the hole in his pants. Scared? My Gawd, you never see a man so scared. That gurl, cool as a cucumber, cocked the gun again, an' held Hays up—then all of us."

"We was sittin' at the table. She made us all stand, hands high, an' then she performed that little trick with Hank's gun agin my gizzard. Jim, I hope to die if I didn't go cold an' stiff. But I promised on my word of honor—as a robber—that I'd tie Hank up, an' make the other fellers play square. It was so funny, too, that I near bust. Hays, soon as he was helpless, got over his scare, an' then was he mad! I reckon no one on this earth saw a madder man. He cussed so terrible that she made me gag him."

"Well, I'll be—blowed!" gasped Jim.

"No wonder. We was wuss. We'd had breakfast, an' Hank was tryin' to face us fellers. I'll say he came clean, Jim. He divided all the money he got from Herrick an' his sister, an' the gold things an' diamonds. 'Fellers,' he said, 'I could lie an' say I meant to give this to you later. But I'm not built that way. I double-crossed you all—first time in my life. I meant to keep it all, an' the ransom, fer the girl. But now there won't be no ransom, for I'm not goin' to give her up. She's mine, an' I can do as I want, an' if any of you don't like it you can make your kick now.'"

"Wal, we was so plumb flabbergasted that we didn't see the gurl, who came close on the sun side of Happy's shelter. She heard the whole d—n show. . . . Jim, I wish you could have seen her when she stepped up to Hank. I don't know what did it—mebbe her eyes—but he shored wilted. It was then she snatched his gun."

"So that's the deal!" ejaculated Jim.

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't ask me. I gave my word an' I'll keep it. For that matter the rest of our outfit atter the gurl, ransom or no ransom."

Suddenly Jim awoke out of his stupefaction to remember the approach of Heeseeman.

"Smoky, I know what you're all going to do, and that's fight," he flashed, curtly. "Heeseeman's outfit is coming. I sighted them perhaps three miles. Traveling slow, but sure. We've got no time to pack an' get away. We've got to find the best place to stand an' fight, an' pack our stuff into it pronto."

"Heeseeman!" cried Smoky, coolly.

"So it's come. I reckoned on that. Git busy, men."

Jim strode under the shelter to face Miss Herrick. She had heard, for she was white.

"We're all but surprised by Heeseeman's outfit," he said, abruptly. "We must fight. You will be worse off if you fall into their hands. I'm sorry I must release Hays. We need him."

"Too late!" she exclaimed.

"Pack your things quickly and hurry over to the cave on this side." Then Jim picked up Hays' gun from the table and ran out. First he removed the gag, then in terse terms he stated the situation. Next he released the

CHAPTER IX—Continued

"I should shiver she did. Struck Hays' hair-trigger gun—cocked—right into my belly, an' says: 'Will you tie this villain—an' swear by your honor not to release him or allow any of these other men to do so—or will you have me shoot you?'"

"How'd she get that gun?"

"Wal, she snatched it quicker'n lightning, that's how. An' when she cocked it with both hands it went off bang! The bullet went between Hank's legs. Ticked him. You can see the hole in his pants. Scared? My Gawd, you never see a man so scared. That gurl, cool as a cucumber, cocked the gun again, an' held Hays up—then all of us."

"We was sittin' at the table. She made us all stand, hands high, an' then she performed that little trick with Hank's gun agin my gizzard. Jim, I hope to die if I didn't go cold an' stiff. But I promised on my word of honor—as a robber—that I'd tie Hank up, an' make the other fellers play square. It was so funny, too, that I near bust. Hays, soon as he was helpless, got over his scare, an' then was he mad! I reckon no one on this earth saw a madder man. He cussed so terrible that she made me gag him."

"Well, I'll be—blowed!" gasped Jim.

"No wonder. We was wuss. We'd had breakfast, an' Hank was tryin' to face us fellers. I'll say he came clean, Jim. He divided all the money he got from Herrick an' his sister, an' the gold things an' diamonds. 'Fellers,' he said, 'I could lie an' say I meant to give this to you later. But I'm not built that way. I double-crossed you all—first time in my life. I meant to keep it all, an' the ransom, fer the girl. But now there won't be no ransom, for I'm not goin' to give her up. She's mine, an' I can do as I want, an' if any of you don't like it you can make your kick now.'"

"Wal, we was so plumb flabbergasted that we didn't see the gurl, who came close on the sun side of Happy's shelter. She heard the whole d—n show. . . . Jim, I wish you could have seen her when she stepped up to Hank. I don't know what did it—mebbe her eyes—but he shored wilted. It was then she snatched his gun."

"So that's the deal!" ejaculated Jim.

"What are you going to do?"

"Don't ask me. I gave my word an' I'll keep it. For that matter the rest of our outfit atter the gurl, ransom or no ransom."

Suddenly Jim awoke out of his stupefaction to remember the approach of Heeseeman.

"Smoky, I know what you're all going to do, and that's fight," he flashed, curtly. "Heeseeman's outfit is coming. I sighted them perhaps three miles. Traveling slow, but sure. We've got no time to pack an' get away. We've got to find the best place to stand an' fight, an' pack our stuff into it pronto."

"Heeseeman!" cried Smoky, coolly.

"So it's come. I reckoned on that. Git busy, men."

Jim strode under the shelter to face Miss Herrick. She had heard, for she was white.

"We're all but surprised by Heeseeman's outfit," he said, abruptly. "We must fight. You will be worse off if you fall into their hands. I'm sorry I must release Hays. We need him."

"Too late!" she exclaimed.

"Pack your things quickly and hurry over to the cave on this side." Then Jim picked up Hays' gun from the table and ran out. First he removed the gag, then in terse terms he stated the situation. Next he released the

## IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

(By REV. P. B. FITZWATER, D. D., Member of Faculty, Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.)

### Lesson for February 24

#### PETER HEALS A LAME MAN

LESSON TEXT—Acts 3:1-10; 4:3-12. GOLDEN TEXT—Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.—Acts 3:6. PRIMARY TOPIC—How Peter Healed a Lame Man. JUNIOR TOPIC—Peter Carrying on Jesus' Work. INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—A Helping Hand. YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—Gifts That Are Better Than Money.

In the teaching of this lesson it will be necessary to include all the material in Acts 3:1 to 4:31.

#### I. Peter Healing the Lame Man (Acts 3:1-10).

1. The place (vv. 1, 2). It was at the gate called Beautiful, which leads from the outer to the inner court of the temple.

2. The man (v. 2). This beggar was infirm from his birth. When he saw Peter and John, he asked alms.

3. The method (vv. 3-5).

a. Gaining the man's attention (v. 4). Peter and John commanded him to look on them, but not because they had any power within themselves.

b. Peter commanded him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth to rise and walk (v. 6). He had been unable to do this all his life, but with the command went the ability to do.

c. Peter took him by the right hand (v. 7). This act was meant to give impetus to his faith, not strength to his ankles.

4. The man's response (v. 8). Strength came into his feet and ankle bones at once. He stood, he walked, he leaped, and praised God.

5. The effect (vv. 9-11). The people were filled with amazement.

a. This helpless beggar had to be carried to the temple gate. Men and women out of Christ are so helpless that they need to be brought where the life of God can be applied to them.

b. Peter, in taking the man by the hand, shows the manner of helping the lost. While ministers and Sunday school teachers of themselves have nothing to give to the lost, they have the dispensing of the gospel of Christ.

II. Peter Witnessing Before the Multitude (3:12-26).

He told them it was faith in Jesus Christ, whom God had glorified and whom they had deliberately betrayed and crucified, that had healed this man. Despite their awful guilt, he appealed to them to repent (v. 19). God would pardon them if they would repent, and refreshing seasons would come to them when God should send back Jesus Christ to the earth to consummate the work of redemption.

III. Peter in Prison for Christ's Sake (4:1-4).

1. The leaders in this persecution (vv. 1, 2). Both priests and Sadducees joined in this wickedness. The priests were intolerant because these new teachers were encroaching upon their functions. The Sadducees joined the priests because they did not believe in the resurrection, which was a vital part of the apostolic teaching.

2. The result (vv. 8, 4). Peter and John were arrested and imprisoned. Though the witnesses were held in bondage by chains, Christ was not bound. The number of believers had greatly increased, so that there were now about five thousand.

IV. Peter Witnessing Before the Sanhedrin (4:5-22).

1. The Inquiry (v. 5-7). They inquired as to by what power and name they had wrought this miracle.

2. Peter's answer (vv. 8-12). With stinging sarcasm he showed them that they were not on trial as evildoers, but for doing good to the helpless and needy man. Since they could not deny the miracle, he boldly declared that it had been done in the name of Christ, and that the only way for them to escape God's judgment was to believe on his name.

3. The Impression upon the Sanhedrin (vv. 13-22). They were made conscious that they were on trial instead of sitting as judges upon Peter and John.

b. They took knowledge that Peter and John had been with Jesus (v. 13).

c. They forbade them to speak in Christ's name (v. 18).

d. Peter and John expressed their determination to obey God rather than man (vv. 19, 20).

e. Their release (v. 21). Seeing that the people were on the side of the apostles they had no way to punish them.

V. The Church at Prayer (vv. 23-31). They praised God