

**CHARLES ALDEN  
SELTZER**



**THE COMING  
OF THE LAW**

**Charles Alden Seltzer**

# **The Coming of the Law**

**Enriched edition.**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Gabriel Fox*

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# CHAPTER I

## THE ARRIVAL OF THE MAN

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If the passengers on the west-bound train that pulled up at the little red wooden station at Dry Bottom at the close of a June day in 18-, were interested in the young man bearing the two suit cases, they gave no evidence of it. True, they noted his departure; with casual glances they watched him as he stepped down upon the platform; but immediately they forgot his athletic figure and his regular featured, serious face as their thoughts returned to the heat, the dust, and the monotony of travel.

There was the usual bustle and activity which always follows the arrival of a train. A mail bag was dumped out of the mail car, another thrown in; some express packages were unceremoniously deposited near the door of the station by the agent; the conductor ran to the telegrapher's window to receive an order; ran back, signaling as he ran; the engine bell clanged, the drivers clanked, the wheels ground, the passengers sighed, and the train departed on its way.

The young man who had alighted stood motionless for a moment, listening to the clatter of the wheels over the rail-joints, watching the smoke from the engine-stack befoul the clear blue of the sky. Then he smiled grimly, threw a rapid glance toward a group of loungers standing at a corner of the station, and walked over to where the station agent stood examining some newly arrived packages.

“Do you mind directing me to the courthouse?” said the young man.

The agent looked up, turned, and ran a measuring, speculative eye over the new arrival. He noted the Eastern cut of the young man’s clothing and beneath the dust of travel the clear, healthy white skin of his face. “Stranger here?” observed the agent, with a slight, humorous narrowing of the eyes.

“Yes.”

“No, I don’t mind,” resumed the agent, answering the young man’s question. “You won’t have any trouble findin’ the courthouse. There’s only one street in this town an’ the courthouse is down to the other end of it—you couldn’t miss it if you tried.” He grinned with some amusement at the young man’s back as the latter with a cordial “thank you,” returned to his suit cases, gripped them firmly by the handles, and strode down the wooden platform toward the street, ignoring the group of loungers at the corner of the station.

“‘Nother tenderfoot[4],” remarked one of the loungers as the young man passed out of hearing; “they’re runnin’ this country plum to hell!”

The young man strode slowly down the board sidewalk that paralleled the buildings on one side of the street, mentally taking in the dimensions of the town. It was not an inviting picture. Many buildings of various descriptions snuggled the wide, vacant space which the station agent had termed a “street.” Most of the buildings were unpainted and crude, composed of rough boards running perpendicularly, with narrow battens over the joints. There

were several brick buildings two stories in height, bearing the appearance of having been recently erected, and these towered over the squat, one-story frames in seeming contemptuous dignity. There were many private dwellings, some stores, but the young man's first impression was that there was an enormous number of saloons.

He saw few people; those who came within range of vision were apparently cowboys, for they were rigged in the picturesque garb that he had studied many times in the illustrations of Eastern magazines. He had admired them afar, for there was something about them, something in the free, wild life they led, that appealed to him; something that struck at the primitive in his heart. He had heard tales of them; travelers returning from these regions had related sundry stories of these wild men of the plains; stories of their hardihood, of their recklessness, of their absolute fearlessness—clothing them with a glamor and romance that had deeply impressed the young man. His own life had been rather prosaic.

He saw some cowponies hitched to rails in front of several of the saloons; in front of a store he observed a canvas-covered wagon which he recognized (from sketches he had seen) as a “prairie schooner[1]”; in front of another store he saw a spring wagon of the “buckboard[2]” variety. That was all. The aroma of sage-brush filled his nostrils; the fine, flint-like, powdered alkali dust lay thick everywhere. It was unattractive and dismal.

The town, as it lay before him, began in desolation and ended in desolation. Except that it was a trifle larger it differed in no important particular from many others that

littered the face of the world through which he had passed during the last twenty-four hours. It was a mere dot in the center of a flat grass country covering a vast area. It sat, serene in its isolation, as far from civilization as Genesis from Revelation. In the stifling heat of the lazy June afternoon it drowsed, seemingly deserted except for the ponies and the two wagons, and the few incurious cowboys who had rewarded the young man with their glances. Apparently whatever citizens were here were busy in the saloons. As this thought flashed upon the young man his lips straightened grimly. But he continued slowly on his way, giving much attention to objects that came within his range of vision. The more he saw of the town, the less pleased he was with it.

The suit cases were heavy; he paused in front of a building and set them down, while with his handkerchief he mopped the dust and perspiration from his forehead. He saw a flaring sign on the roof of the building in front of which he had stopped and he read the legend with a smile of derision: "The Fashion Saloon." Several ponies were hitched to the rail in front of the building; the bridle of one was gaily decorated with a bow of ribbon. Only a woman would have decorated a pony thus, the young man decided with a smile. Yet what sort of woman would hitch her pony in front of a saloon? He looked about him for some explanation and saw a vacant space beside him and beside the vacant space a store. There was no hitching rail in front of the store, therefore here was the explanation. He heard a sound behind him and turning he beheld the figures of a man and a woman in the vacant space between the two buildings.

The woman seemed to be little more than a girl, for as the young man watched she turned slightly toward him—though not seeing him—and he saw youth pictured on her face, and innocence, though withal she gave the young man an impression of sturdy self-reliance that awakened instant admiration for her in his mind.

She was attired in picturesque costume, consisting of short riding skirt, boots, felt hat, woolen blouse with a flowing tie at the throat, gloves, and spurs. It was not the sort of thing to which the young man was accustomed, but she made an attractive picture and he took in every detail of her appearance with eager eyes.

It was some time before he noticed the man. The latter stood facing the girl and he could not get a view of his face. He had a gigantic frame, with huge shoulders that loomed above the girl, dwarfing her. The young man remained motionless, watching the two, for there was something in the big man's attitude that held him. The man turned presently and the young man had a glimpse of his face. It was heavy featured, coarse, and an unmistakable brutality was betrayed in it. The young man's lips curled. He did not like the type, and it was the girl's face that held him now that he had seen the man's.

He leaned easily against the front of the building, not over fifteen feet distant from the two, trying to appear uninterested, but not concealing his interest. He believed the girl had not seen him, for though she had looked in his direction he was sure that her glance had passed him to rest on the pony at the hitching rail. Swift as the glance had been the young man had seen in her face an expression

that caused him to decide to remain where he was until the girl mounted her pony, no matter how long that time might be. So he relaxed, leaning against the building—attentive, listening, though apparently entirely unconcerned over their conversation.

The girl seemed moved with some deep emotion over something the big man had said, for her slight figure had stiffened and she stood looking at him with an angry, intense gaze. The big man had been taunting her, for his teeth showed in a mocking grin as he hovered near her, apparently sure of her. It was like a lion playing with a mouse. Then the young man heard the big man's voice:

“So you don't take kindly to my courting? Don't want anything to do with me at all?” His forced laugh had a harshness in it that caused the young man's muscles to stiffen. He took a sly glance at the girl and saw her chin uplift with disdain.

“Do you think it necessary for me to tell you that-again?” she said.

A strange satisfaction thrilled the young man; sympathy for her drew his mouth into a peculiarly grim smile. But he had no time to enjoy his satisfaction for the big man spoke and this time he did not laugh.

“Well,” he said shortly, “you're going to have something to do with me. You're going to hook up with me or I'm putting that crazy brother of yours out of business!”

The girl was suddenly rigid and a deep red as suddenly suffused her cheeks. The young man's face paled at the threat, his teeth came together with a snap, and he leaned forward, wishing to hear some more of this extraordinary

conversation. More of it came quickly. The girl spoke, her voice even and well controlled, though burdened with a biting sarcasm:

“What a terrible man you are, to be sure, to threaten to make war upon a defenseless girl and her afflicted brother. But I’m not afraid of you!”

She took a step toward him, standing very close to him and looking straight into his eyes. She was fighting bravely for her composure, but the young man had seen that her lips had quivered pitifully during her brief speech. He stiffened with sympathy. He could not, of course, understand this strange conversation, but he could discern its drift, and the suggestive underplay in the big man’s words. But plainly he had not been mistaken in his estimate of the young woman—she seemed entirely able to take care of herself.

He crowded a little closer, though he knew that this conversation was none of his affair further than that he was interested—as any man would be interested—in seeing that the young woman received decent treatment. Certainly so far she had not received that, yet neither had the big man said anything to warrant interference by a stranger. Stealing another glance, the young man saw a heavy revolver at the man’s hip, and he did not doubt, from what he had thus far seen of him, that he would use the weapon should he turn and discover that there was a listener to his conversation. Such an action would accord perfectly with tales that the young man had heard of this section of the country. But he edged closer.

The big man's face had become poisonously bloated. The girl's defiance seemed to have enraged him.

"Hell!" he said venomously. "You're talking damn brave!" He leaned closer to her. "And you think you'd be disgraced if folks knowed you was a friend of mine?" He laughed harshly. "Most folks are tickled to be known as my friend. But I'm telling you this: If I ain't a friend I'm an enemy, and you're doing as I say or I'm making things mighty unpleasant for you and your poor, 'afflicted' brother!"

The young man saw the girl's hands clench, saw her face grow slowly pale. Twice now had the big man taunted her about her brother, and plainly his words had hurt her. Words trembled on her lips but refused to come. But for an instant she forced her eyes to meet those of the man and then they suddenly filled with tears. She took a backward step, her shoulders drooping. The big man followed her, gloating over her. Again the young man's thoughts went to the lion and the mouse.

"Hurts, does it?" said the big man, brutally. "Well, you've brought it on yourself, being such a damn prude!"

He reached out and grasped her by the shoulder. She shrank back, struggling with him, trying to grasp the butt of an ivory-handled revolver that swung at her right hip. The big man pinned her arms and the effort was futile.

And then retribution-like an avalanche-struck the big man. He heard the movement, sensed the danger, and flung his right hand toward his pistol butt. There was a silent struggle; a shot, one of the young man's arms swung out-flail like-the clenched hand landing with a crash. The big man went down like a falling tree-prone to the ground, his

revolver flying ten feet distant, a little blue-white smoke curling lazily upward out of its muzzle. The big man was raised again-bodily-and hurled down again. He lay face upward in the white sunlight-a mass of bruised and bleeding flesh.

The young man's anger had come and gone. He stood over the big man, looking down at him, his white teeth gleaming through his slightly parted lips.

"I think that will do for you," he said in an even, passionless voice.

For an instant there was a tense silence. The young man turned and looked at the girl, who was regarding him with surprised and bewildered eyes.

The young man smiled mirthlessly. "I think I waited rather too long. But he won't bother you again-at least for a few minutes."

He saw the girl's gaze directed to a point somewhere behind him and he turned to see that a door in the side of the Fashion Saloon was vomiting men. They came rushing out, filling the space between the two buildings-cowboys mostly, with a sprinkling of other men whose appearance and attire proclaimed them citizens. The young man stood silent while the newcomers ranged themselves about him, others giving their attention to the big man who still lay on the ground. The girl had not moved; she was standing near the young man, her face pale, her slight figure rigid, her eyes wide and flashing. The young man looked from her to the men who had crowded about him and he became aware that one of the men-a slender, olive-skinned cowboy-evidently a half-breed-was speaking to him. He stood

looking at the man, saw menace in his eyes, heard his voice, writhing in profane accusation:

“So you’ve shot Beeg Beel, you tenderfoot—!” said the man. His right hand was hooked in his cartridge belt, near the butt of his six-shooter.

The young man had been coldly scrutinizing the face of the half-breed; he had seen a sneering insolence on the thin, snarling lips, and he knew instantly that this man was a friend of his fallen adversary. He had smiled grimly when the man had begun speaking, being willing to argue the justice of his action in striking the big man, but at the man’s vile insult his white teeth gleamed again and his right arm flew out—like a flail—the fist crashing against the half-breed’s jaw. Like the big man the half-breed collapsed in a heap on the ground. There was a sudden movement in the crowd, and pistols flashed in the sunlight. The young man took a backward step, halted, drew himself up and faced them, his lips curling.

“Of course you’ll shoot now,” he said bitterly.

He heard a rustle beside him, and turned to see the girl standing within a foot of him, the ivory-handled pistol in hand, her eyes flashing coldly.

“I don’t think that any of them are going to shoot,” she declared evenly, her voice resounding in the sudden silence that had fallen; “Big Bill got just what he deserved, and this gentleman will not be molested. He isn’t armed,” she said, with a dry laugh; “shooting him would be murder, and if he is shot I promise to avenge him immediately.” She turned slightly, speaking to the young man while keeping her eyes on the men around her. During the pause that followed her

words several of the men stealthily sheathed their weapons and stepped back.

“I think Big Bill is able to fight his own battles,” continued the girl, taking advantage of the evident reluctance of the men to force trouble.

Her face became slightly paler as she saw the big man sit up and stare about him. He got to his feet and stood, swaying dizzily for an instant, and then his gaze sought out the young man and was fixed on him with foreboding malignance. His right hand fell to his holster, and finding no weapon there he turned and sought it, finding it, and returning to a point near the young man, the weapon in hand. As he halted there was another movement and the half-breed was on his feet and dragging at his revolver. The young man crouched, prepared to spring, and the big man spoke sharply to the half-breed.

“Quit it!” he said, snarling. “Mind your own business!” Then he seemed to realize that the half-breed had been worsted also, for he looked at the latter, saw the dust on his clothing and grinned expressively.

“So he got you too, did he, Yuma?” His heavy features wreathed into a mocking sneer as he faced the young man.

“Knocked me down!” he said in a silky, even voice. “Knocked me cold with a punch. Knocked Yuma Ed down too!” He took another step toward the young man and surveyed him critically, his eyes glinting with something very near amusement. Then he stepped back, laughing shortly.

“I ain’t shooting you,” he said. “I’ve got an idea that you and me will meet again.” There was an ominous threat in his

voice as he continued: "Shooting you wouldn't half pay you back. Mark that, young man-shooting you wouldn't half pay you back."

He stepped away from the young man, motioning the other men into the door through which they had emerged to come to his assistance, and they filed slowly in without protest. The big man paused long enough to look again at the young man.

"Knocked me down!" he said as though scarcely able to realize the truth; "knocked me cold with a punch!" He laughed, his coarse features twisting into an odd expression. "Well, I'll be damned!" He turned abruptly and disappeared through the door through which the other men had gone.

For an instant the young man stood, looking after him. Then he turned and saw the young woman, standing near her pony, regarding him with grave eyes.

"Thank you," she said. He caught a flashing smile and then she was in the saddle, loping her pony down the street toward the station. For a moment the young man looked after her and then with a smile he returned to his suit cases and was off down the street toward the courthouse, which he saw in the distance.

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# CHAPTER II

## THE RULE OF CATTLE

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The courthouse was a low, one-story redbrick building, sitting well back from the street. It was evidently newly built, for an accumulation of débris, left by the workmen, still littered the ground in the vicinity. A board walk led from the street to the wide, arched entrance. From the steps one could look down the street at the station and the other buildings squatting in the sunlight, dingy with the dust of many dry days. Except for the cowponies and the buckboard and the prairie schooner there was a total absence of life or movement, offering a striking contrast to the bustling cities to which the young man had been accustomed.

He walked rapidly down the board walk, entered the courthouse, and paused before a door upon which appeared the legend: "United States District Court. J. Blackstone Graney." The young man set his suit cases down, mopped his forehead with his handkerchief, making a wry face at the dust that appeared on the linen after his use of it, and then knocked lightly, but firmly, on the door. A voice inside immediately admonished him to "come in." The young man smiled with satisfaction, turned the knob and opened the door, standing on the threshold. A man seated at one of the windows of the room was gazing steadily out at the vast, dry, sun-scorched country. He turned at the young man's entrance and got slowly to his feet, apparently waiting for the visitor to speak. He was a short man, not heavily, but stockily built, giving a clear impression of stolidity. Yet there

was a certain gleam in his eyes that gave the lie to this impression, a gleam that warned of an active, analytical mind. Judicial dignity lurked all over him.

The young man bowed respectfully. "Are you Judge Graney?" he questioned.

The judge nodded and the young man smiled slightly. "I am Kent Hollis," he said.

The judge had been approaching a big table that stood in the center of the room and at the young man's words he took a second glance at him, but did not hesitate in his walk toward the table. However, he smiled when he reached it, sinking into a chair and motioning the young man to another.

"I have been expecting you," he said after he had become seated. "Take a chair." He waited until the young man had drawn a chair opposite him and then he leaned over the table and stretched out his hand in greeting. "I'm glad to see you," he continued cordially. He held the young man's hand for an instant, peering steadily into the latter's unwavering eyes, apparently making a mental estimate of him. Then he dropped the hand and sat back, a half smile on his face. "You look like your father," he said.

The young man's face clouded. "Poor dad," he said slowly.

For a moment there was a silence; the judge studied the young man's face. Something that he saw in it must have pleased him, for he smiled, becoming serious instantly.

"I am sorry you could not get here in time," he said. "We buried your father yesterday."

"I couldn't make it," returned the young man regretfully. "I should have liked to see him before he died. Where did you bury him?"

"We took him out to his ranch—the Circle Bar," returned the judge, "where he said he wanted to be buried when he died. You'll find that the Circle Bar boys have done their best for him—which was little enough. Poor fellow, he deserved something better." He looked keenly at the young man.

Lines of pain came into the latter's face; he bowed his head, nodding at the Judge's words.

"I have always thought that it was his own fault," he said gently. "It might have been different." He looked slowly up at the judge, his face reddening with embarrassment. "Of course you know something of his life," he said. "You were his friend—he wrote me a while back, telling me that. I don't pretend to know what came between him and mother," he continued; "mother would never tell and father never mentioned it in his letters. I have thought it was drink," he added, watching the judge's face closely. He caught the latter's slight nod and his lips straightened. "Yes, it must have been drink," he continued; "I have inferred that from what mother has hinted now and then. But—" and a wistful gleam came into his eyes—"I have hoped that it would not be drink that would cause his—"

He caught the judge's slow, grave nod and he broke off abruptly, his eyes filling with an expression of resignation. "Well," he said, "it is ended, no matter what did it." He shoved back his chair. "I thank you for what you did for him," he added, rising; "I assure you that if it is possible for me to repay—"

“Sit down,” said the judge, waving a hand to the young man’s chair. “No thanks are due me. I did only what any friend would do for another. I have arranged for you to go out to the Circle Bar,” he informed Hollis as the latter hesitated over resuming his chair. “Neil Norton, your range boss, is to be here at six o’clock with the buckboard.” He consulted his watch. “He ought to be here in half an hour—if he is on time. Meantime there are some things I would like to say to you.”

Hollis smiled. “Fire away,” he directed.

The judge leaned his elbows on the table and narrowed his eyes at Hollis. “Don’t think my questions impertinent,” he said gravely, “for I assure you that nothing is further from my mind than a desire to pry into your affairs. But I take it you will need some advice—which, of course, you may disregard if you wish. I suppose you don’t make a secret of your age?”

“No,” was the instant reply, given with a grin, “I am twenty-six.”

The judge smiled dryly. “We have great ambitions at twenty-six,” he said. “I remember that at twenty-six I was rather determined on making the Supreme bench. You can see for yourself how far I missed it. I do not say that we never realize our ambitions,” he added quickly as he saw a flash light up the young man’s eyes; “I merely wish to show that in my case they were rather extravagant.” He grimaced, continuing with a smile: “You are a college man, of course—I can see that.”

Hollis nodded. The judge continued, with an admiring glance at the young man’s muscular frame and broad

shoulders.

“Went in for athletics-football, and such?” he said. “Well,” he added, catching the young man’s nod, “it didn’t hurt you a particle—it doesn’t hurt anybody. Rather prepares a man for hard knocks—which he is sure to get sooner or later. If you have decided to live in this country you must expect hard knocks. And I presume you are going to live here?”

“That depends.” returned Hollis. “If father has left his affairs in such shape that it is necessary for me to stay here and straighten them out, why of course I shall stay. Otherwise—” He hesitated and laughed quietly, continuing: “Well, I also have an ambition, and if I am compelled to remain here it will have to be sacrificed. It is a rather humble ambition compared to yours,” he laughed. “It is journalism,” he continued, suddenly serious; “I want to own a newspaper. I am city editor now and in a few years—” He laughed. “I am not going to prophesy, but I have been working hard.”

The judge’s eyelashes flickered, but his face remained grave. “I am afraid that you will have to remain here. That is”—he added dryly—“if you expect to realize anything from the property.”

“I expect there can’t be much property,” observed Hollis.

The judge smiled. “A thousand acres of good grass land, some buildings, and”—here the judge’s eyes gleamed and he drawled his words—“a newspaper.”

Hollis sat erect. “A newspaper!” he gasped. “A newspaper in this country? Why, man, a newspaper—”

The judge laughed. "So you will not have to go back East in order to be able to realize your ambition—you can own a newspaper here—your father's newspaper—the Dry Bottom *Kicker*. It was quite a recent venture; I believe it appeared about a dozen times—intermittently. Ostensibly it was a weekly, but in reality it was printed at those times when your father's affliction sat least heavily upon him. He used to hire a compositor from Las Vegas to set the type,—a man named Potter—a worthless sort of fellow, but a genius in his way—when sober. I suspect that much of the matter that went into the *Kicker* emanated from the brain of Dave Potter."

Hollis's smile revealed just a trace of derision. "You don't happen to know how father happened to think that a newspaper would pay—in this place?" he asked.

The judge looked at him meditatively, a gleam of quiet amusement in his eyes. "I don't remember to have said that the paper made any money for your father," he returned slowly; "nor do I remember hearing your father say that he expected it to make any money. As I understand the situation, your father founded the paper on principle. He expected to use it as a weapon."

"Please go on," urged Hollis. "That strikes me as a rather Quixotic proceeding."

"It was, rather," admitted the judge; "that is, it would seem Quixotic as viewed by an Eastern newspaper man. But out here people are apt to ignore money and methods in considering results. After you have been here a while you will be able to see the force and truth of that statement. Your father was after results and he seized upon the idea of

founding a newspaper as a means by which to obtain them. And I feel certain that had he lived he would have succeeded.”

“I plead ignorance,” said Hollis, watching the judge closely. “What particular result did my father desire?”

Judge Graney’s eyes gleamed with earnestness. He leaned forward, speaking slowly and distinctly.

“I am going to illustrate my point by giving you a brief history of your father’s experiences out here—as I had it from him. He came out here about fifteen years ago and took up a quarter-section of land over on Rabbit-Ear Creek, the present site of the Circle Bar ranch. For quite a few years he was a nester[5]—as the small owner is called in this country, but he was unmolested for the reason that there were few large owners in the vicinity and each man was willing that his neighbor should succeed. Your father prospered and after a few years began to buy land. He finally acquired a thousand acres; he told me that at one time he had about five thousand head of cattle. Of course, these cattle could not live on your father’s thousand acres, but the ranges are free and the thousand acres answered very well as a headquarters.

“Eight years ago some men in Santa Fe organized what is known as the Union County Cattlemen’s Association. This company secured a section of land adjoining your father’s property, on the other side of Rabbit-Ear Creek. The company called its ranch the Circle Cross. Perhaps it strikes you as peculiar that the Association should have chosen a brand so closely resembling your father’s. I will digress long enough to explain the action.”

The judge drew out a pencil and picked up a piece of paper that lay near him on the desk, making some crude hieroglyphics and poising his pencil above them.

“Here,” he explained, indicating a sketch which he had drawn, “is the Circle Bar brand—a bar within a circle. And this—” indicating another sketch, “—is the Circle Cross—a cross within a circle. It is of course, perfectly obvious that all the Circle Cross company had to do when it desired to appropriate one of the Circle Bar cattle was to add a vertical bar to the Circle Bar brand and the brand became the Circle Cross. From a mechanical standpoint it was a very trifling operation, the manipulator of the brands having merely to apply the hot iron through a piece of wet blanket—that gives a new brand the appearance of age.

“To get back to the main subject. The new company called its ranch the Circle Cross and it erected new buildings within a few miles of the Circle Bar buildings. Not long after the advent of the new company it tried to buy the Circle Bar, but your father refused to sell. Bill Dunlavey, the Circle Cross manager, attempted to negotiate the purchase of the Circle Bar and when he was met with refusal hard words passed between him and your father. Not long after that your father began to miss cattle—rustlers began a systematic attack upon his herds. Your father recognized this thievery as the work of the Cattlemen’s Association and he fought back.

“A number of times he changed his brands but each time the company checkmated him. To illustrate: Your father changed his brand to appear thus:” The judge drew again on the paper. “That is the ‘Wine-Glass’ brand. You can see

heavy rain; here it denotes intermittent channels crossing the trail.

**8** A reference to a .45-caliber Colt handgun, commonly the Colt Single Action Army revolver introduced in 1873 and widely used in the American West; the term is often used generically for large-caliber Colt pistols of that era.

**9** The proper name of the ranch central to the story; ranch names with elements like 'Bar' often reflect cattle-brand symbols, and here it designates the Circle Bar ranch and its associated holdings.

**10** The city of Santa Fe in New Mexico (spelled with the acute accent in the text), a regional trade and supply center historically important to ranching and frontier communities.

**11** An organization of ranchers referred to in the chapter that wields economic and political influence in the county; in the novel it functions as a powerful local interest opposing small ranch owners like the Circle Bar.

**12** In the text, the Kicker is the local weekly newspaper Hollis edits; in frontier fiction a named paper often represents a town's primary public forum for news and opinion.

**13** Dry Bottom is the fictional small town in Union County where the story is set; such place-names are typical of American Western fiction and denote a frontier settlement.

**14** Lazette is a neighboring town mentioned in rivalry with Dry Bottom (its paper is the Eagle); the name functions as a fictional nearby community in the story.

**15** Here 'The express' refers to the scheduled fast train or mail coach leaving town (the six-o'clock train), a common

means of passenger and postal transport in late 19th-/early 20th-century rural America.

**16** Ten Spot is a gunman's nickname in the story; the text explains it alludes to an exploit of shooting the spots from a ten-of-hearts card, a colorful alias indicating marksmanship and reputation.

**17** An idiosyncratic spelling of French *nom de plume*, meaning a pen name or alias; in the passage it denotes a pseudonym used to rile or provoke others.

**18** The Fashion saloon is a named drinking establishment in Dry Bottom where townspeople and cowboys gather; saloons like this commonly functioned as social and commercial hubs in frontier towns.

**19** 'Cimarron doctor' refers to a physician based in or from Cimarron, a nearby town or county in the American West; several places named Cimarron exist historically (e.g., in New Mexico and Oklahoma), so the text likely means a regional medical practitioner rather than a specific person widely known outside the story.

**20** Rabbit-Ear Creek is a local stream in the chapter that becomes the principal watering place for cattle during the drought; in the narrative it is a strategic geographic feature around which ranching conflict develops.

**21** A repeating rifle is a firearm designed to hold multiple cartridges and fire several shots before needing to be reloaded (late-19th-century examples include lever-action designs such as Winchesters); Hollis obtains one for protection on his trips.

**22** 'Register his brand' refers to the historical practice of recording a rancher's cattle brand with authorities so

ownership can be proven and taxed; brand registration was a common legal requirement in western U.S. cattle country to deter theft and enforce livestock taxes.

**23** A nickname used in the story for one of the ranch hands who writes humorous verse; he functions as a poet and member of the Circle Bar crew rather than a documented historical figure.

**24** A dialectal word meaning something that 'toots' (a horn, whistle, or similar sound-maker); here it appears in a humorous, colloquial couplet and is used figuratively in speech.

**25** A dialectal, jocular phrase (spelled 'biscut' in the text) used in the poem for rhyme and comic effect; its literal meaning is unclear but it plays on colloquial Western speech patterns.

**26** A named river or stream in the story's setting (the Rabbit-Ear) that provides water for cattle; it is a fictional local geographic feature referred to several times.

**27** Colloquial form of 'rebranding,' the illegal practice of changing a cow's brand to conceal theft or transfer ownership; a common term in Western accounts of cattle rustling.

**28** A term for a cattle thief who steals or illegally rebrands livestock; widely used in historical and fictional accounts of the American West.

**29** A phrase referring to Dunlavey's public threat that all 'foreign' cattle be removed or driven off within ten days; in the plot it functions as a deadline that escalates local tensions.