

# The Outlaws of the Cariboo

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**S**UICIDE VALLEY is the ominous name of a place four miles south of Clinton, a town of considerable importance in the gold days of the Cariboo. Some unremembered prospector hanged himself there long ago, but today the sheltered spot might well be called Double Murder Valley.

It was there that Moses Paul battered the life out of Alexander Whyte, an American tramp teamster, and it was there that Moses Paul and his fellow outlaw, Paul Spintlum, split the head of Chew Wye, an old Chinese wood cutter.

Twenty miles north, the outlaws shot and killed Constable Alexander Kindness.

These three murders led to a spectacular chase over hundred of miles of wild and rugged territory, lasted eighteen months, engaged the services of scores of policemen, trackers, and volunteers, cost British Columbia over \$100,000, and came to an end when the vanity of Indian chiefs finally overcame their natural reluctance to surrender their fellows.

Moses Paul was twenty-five when he attained sudden notoriety. Up to then he had lived dully on the Clinton reserve, his only distinction being that he was the best rifle shot in the district.

On July 4, 1911, Moses Paul fell in with Alexander Whyte in Suicide Valley. The American was celebrating the Glorious Fourth and shared his whisky with the Indian. A quarrel followed. Savaged by drink, Moses Paul battered in his companion's head with a large stone, placed the empty bottle in his right hand, then rode home to the reserve.

At the inquest old Chew Wye told of seeing Moses Paul drinking with the victim.

Jack McMillan, Clinton's lone constable, well past his prime, arrested Moses Paul and searched his cabin. He found a watch and a few trifles which had belonged to the murdered man.

Lodged in Clinton's rather primitive jail, Moses Paul escaped after his sister Celestine had smuggled in a file hidden in a large piece of smoked salmon. Constable McMillan was out of town at the time, cutting hay. He considered Moses Paul a good Indian when not in liquor.

The escape was engineered by Paul Spintlum, a crafty, cunning, resourceful "bad" Indian who had frequently been in trouble, and whose ambition was to be an outlaw. His great handicap was that he was a poor shot. With Moses Paul as a partner, he figured he could defy the white man and become a hero of sorts.

The two Indians fled to the mountains behind Clinton and remained there for weeks, slipping down to the ranches occasionally at night for food and supplies. None of their fellows would give the authorities any help; they were afraid of Paul Spintlum, whom they described as *cultus*, bad through and through.

With brazen disregard of danger, the outlaws came disguised into Clinton for the fall stampede and did a bit of betting

on the horse races. Full of bravado, Paul Spintlum even talked to Constable McMillan, confident that his impersonation of a crippled old brave would deceive the white man. It didn't fool other Indians, however.

After the stampede the pair returned to their camp in Suicide Valley and finished off a bottle of whisky. Moses Paul showed his companion the exact spot where he had battered out the brains of the American teamster and mentioned that he didn't know Chew Wye had spotted him.

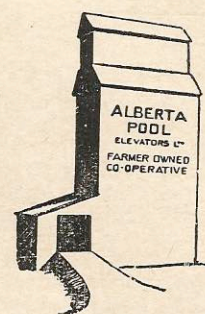
Inflamed by alcohol, crafty Paul Spintlum suggested that if the old Chinaman should die there would be no evidence to convict Moses Paul of murder.

The idea of finishing off the wood cutter appealed to Moses Paul as a pleasant frolic. The pair crept up to Chew Wye's shack, flung open the door and hurled an axe at his head as he bent over the stove cooking his frugal supper. Which one did the actual murder was never learned.

The man-hunt started again, but the Indians knew the country better than did the white pursuers. They got away, and spent most of the winter of 1911-12 around the Kelly Lake Indian Reserve and on a plateau above Big Bear Lake, unseen and unsuspected by the whites, but fed and assisted by the Indians.

On May 3, Charlie Truran, out hunting for stray horses, saw the outlaws near Pollard's ranch, a few miles from Clinton. He galloped into town to give the alarm. The assize court was in session, but

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adjourned so that men might be available for the chase.

Led by Constable Kindness, a posse was made up of Jimmy Boyd, Forest Loring, and Jack Carson, all Cariboo born, and Bill Ritchie, the Clinton blacksmith and a lifelong friend of Kindness.

At Fifty-One Mile Creek they found a pack pony abandoned by the Indians. When Boyd got off his horse to tie the cayuse to a tree a rifle shot rang out.

Constable Kindness fell off his horse, dead.

Two more shots came in quick succession. A bullet struck Forest Loring in the wrist. Spintlum, the poor marksman, was responsible for this. He had aimed for the horse and hit the rider. The Indians did not wish to hurt the Cariboo men, only to scare them. It was different with Kindness. He represented the Law. He was their enemy.

A melancholy cavalcade returned to Clinton to discover that the news of the tragedy had preceded it, with gross exaggerations. The news had come from an old crone named Strawnick, mother of Moses Paul, who was alleged to be a

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witch. She had ridden to a high ridge behind Clinton and shrieked a curse of sudden death on any man who strove to catch her son and his companion.

Of the six who formed that first posse only one survived more than ten years, and he too is now dead.

Because of old Strawnick's curse and because of the fear of Paul Spintlum, the Cariboo Indians would not take part in the tracking of the outlaws. Chief Constable Fernie, in charge of the long hunt which followed, enlisted Kamloops Indians to follow the trail. This they did for twenty-one days, sometimes afoot, but usually on horseback, working mostly in silence and rarely revealing to the white men the signs they could read in the great book of nature.

It was easy enough to see when the two Indians were riding one horse, for there would be no human footprints alongside the hoof marks, but only an Indian could tell, to the hour, how long it was since horse droppings had fallen to the ground. Only a native trapper could know which man had slept and which had kept watch by a camp fire, and none but an Indian would be positive that the fugitives would not go east to the Cariboo Road, but would soon turn west to steal a saddle horse at a certain ranch. They deduced this from the fact that one horse was worn out, and Paul Spintlum had once worked at the ranch where he now meant to steal a replacement.

Chief Constable Fernie, slightly skeptical when told big Moses Paul was now riding the sorrel horse and Paul Spintlum was on the bay which followed, was shown a scarcely visible scratch on a cottonwood tree.

"That was made by the stirrup," explained the tracker. "The mark is three inches lower than Paul Spintlum's stirrup would be. There's a wisp of the sorrel's hair on that bush. The bay is following; his tracks overlap those of the other horse."

Shortly after their getaway from 51-Mile Creek the Indians lost one of their horses, but they retained the saddle. This they hid in the woods, and made a detour of twenty miles to Big Bear Lake where they corralled three separate bunches of horses before they found one tame enough to catch by hand. They had no lariat. Retracing their steps to pick up the saddle, a manoeuvre which greatly puzzled the trackers, they rode up the east side of the Fraser River to Candle Creek and later to Dog Creek.

Provincial police had already moved in to the Indian reserves at these places, but the outlaws got ammunition and a month's supply of food from relatives who answered their smoke signals sent up in the early hours of the morning.

From Dog Creek the outlaws struck eastward through some of the most desolate country in northern British Columbia. Here there is no range land, and no settlers. Immense boulders dot the landscape. Tracking was difficult, almost impossible, but after many weary days a hot scent was found. The fugitives were only a few hours ahead.

Luck was with them. They ran into a bunch of wild horses which obliterated their tracks. The hunt had to be called off six weeks after it started, though it

was known the outlaws were near Fish Lake, a large body of water dotted with scores of islands on which they could hide in safety for months.

By the end of June the special policemen guarding strategic points on the Cariboo Road were withdrawn from duty, and scores of ranches were free of supervision.

That fall Paul Spintlum and Moses Paul came south and wintered at Kelly Lake and Pavillion Mountain, east of Clinton. The authorities knew they were there, but couldn't catch them. Indians wouldn't help.

Later the outlaws slipped across the C.P.R. near Lytton and established themselves near Nicola Lake. The Indians of that district were unfriendly, and another move was made to their old stamping grounds.

At this stage Indian Agent Tom Cumiskey summoned the chiefs of his district and told them that unless Moses Paul and Paul Spintlum were surrendered, they would be deprived of their titles and dignities. This threat was effective, for the Indian is a man of much vanity.

Eight months after the shooting of Constable Kindness, the two outlaws were surrendered to the police.

Moses Paul died in jail.

Paul Spintlum was hanged in Kamloops on December 12, 1913, hopeful to the last that some of his Indian friends would effect a jail delivery in time to save him from the scaffold. The authorities took adequate steps to prevent this.

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#### THE LAST GREAT ROUNDUP

Away up among the star herd  
Out beyond the great divide  
When the last great roundup gathers  
Will we all ride side by side?

Will we see the countless millions  
Gathered on that last great range?  
See the old familiar faces  
Will we know them all again?

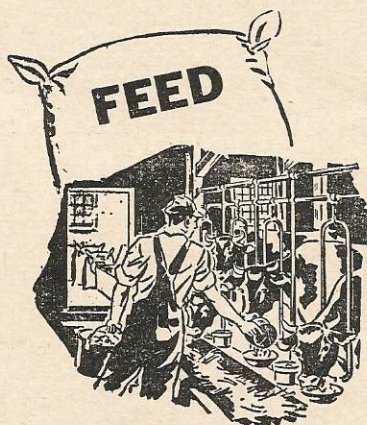
Will there be no snow or winter?  
Will the soft chinook wind blow?  
Summer sun be ever shining,  
Grass and flowers always grow?

Will the range be wide and open  
Like the range of yesterday?  
Will we herd the long-horned doggies  
Along the milky way?

When we drift across the border  
To that range so green and fair  
Will old friends be there to meet us  
When that roundup gathers there?

—Mrs. E. Ward Rivard,  
Fort Vermilion, Alta.

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