

I was as flummoxed now as a duck in thunder. "You've--?"

"Yes, they're a bit makeshift but better than nothing," she said and gestured to the stack of them at the corner of her desk. They were pamphlets bound with yarn, with My Montana Book and the pupil's name bold on the cover. More than just that, the pamphlets were scissored into the shape of the state of Montana--twice as wide as high and the entire left side that curious profile of a face looking down its bent nose at Idaho. I opened the pamphlet proclaiming Dill Egan, grade four, to be its author. Intently--not only was I curious but I was not going to forfeit this opportunity to hover in the near vicinity of Miss Anna Ramsay--as I say, intently I started through the pamphlet pages. Products of Montana, and Dill Egan's confident map of where gold, copper, cattle, sheep and sundry grains each predominated. Area and Population of Montana, 147,138 square miles and 132,159 persons respectively, and his enstarred map showing Helena, Butte, Bozeman, Missoula, Great Falls, Billings, Miles City and the now twenty-four county seats. Mountains of Montana and another map showing the western throng of ranges, Bitterroot and Cabinet and Garnet and Mission and Tendoy and Tobacco Root and on and on until the Bearpaws and Little Rockies and Big Snowys outposted the eastern majority of the state. Drainages of Montana and yet another map of all the rivers and what must have been every respectable creek as well, with the guiding message The Continental Divide separates the Atlantic and the Pacific slopes of America. Railroads of Montana. Minerals of Montana--

I swallowed hard. Anna Ramsay's ten-year-olds all too evidently knew more about Montana than I did. Every one of them a Crofutt in the bud. I took a look around me. High on the blackboard was chalked the majestically handwritten single word:

chilblain

Other than it, the blackboard was freshly cleaned. The best I could scrape together to remark was: "Your chalk keeps talking after school, does it?"

"Yes, that's tomorrow's wander word," she explained. "I write a different one there for each day. That way, when the pupils' eyes wander around the room, they at least are looking at how one word of the language is spelled."

"A sound principle," I managed to concur, wishing I'd thought of it the first day I stepped into my South Fork classroom. Contemplate the miracle of chilblain spelling itself, even approximately, into the mind of Daniel Rozier. My eyes moved on from the blackboard. Her schoolroom shined like the Queen's kitchen. Adam Willox, could you have come into our two classrooms, I have no doubt whom you would have instantly seen to be the better schoolkeeper.

"You were a teacher in Scotland?" I somewhat unnecessarily asked.

"In a dame school." She came somewhere close to smiling as she decided to add: "This is different."

I wanted to sing out to her, so are you, so are you. I wanted to hang Ninian Duff from a high tree by his beard. I wanted to go back out that schoolhouse door, turn myself around three times, and start this anew. I wanted--instead I managed to draw in enough breath to clear my head and free up my tongue: "I'll fetch the geography books to you. Tomorrow, I even could. If there's anything else you need--"

"Mr. Reese will be back from his beloved horses any day. It is his job to see that I have what the school needs. Mr. McCaskill, I do appreciate that you came."

"It's been my pleasure, Miss Ramsay."

Riding home, I was the next thing beyond giddy. Scorpion must have compassed his own route around the west shoulder of Breed Butte and down to my homestead, or he and I would be circling there yet.

Oh, I tried to tell myself whoa and slow. And by the time I'd cooked supper I had myself half-believing I was near to sane again. Steady, don't rush in. For that matter, Miss Anna Ramsay did not look anything like a person who could be rushed. Nor had I made a ribbonwinning job of introducing myself to her.

but I did go to bed with the thought that tomorrow, nothing known on earth could keep me from delivering those geography books to her.

7
I was
astounded
myself.

"This was kind of you"--she, even more glorious on second inspection. "To make the ride over here so soon again."

"Not at all"--myself, earnest without even trying. "If one schoolkeeper can't lend a hand to another schoolkeeper, the world is a poor place."

Just over Anna's head as she stood behind her desk was her blackboard word for today, accommodate, which for the first time in my life I noticed contains more than one m.

"Before you go"--I had no thought oif that--"I do have something further I wonder if you might advise me about, Mr. Mc Caskill."

"Miss Ramsay, if I can I will. What?"

"How do you keep the big boys from playing pranks that have to do with"--she never blinked--"the girls' outhouse?"

With teacup delicacy I outlined to her the curative effects of the boys having to go in the brush. Throughout, she regarded me steadily. Then she swung to the schoolroom window and studied the willow supply along the creek. I stored away forever the fact that her braid swung almost all the way down her back. Evidently she judged the Noon Creek willows ample to their duty, sufficient thatch of them to screen a boy but not enough to thwart the chilly seeking nose of the wind, for she turned around to me and nodded. "Yes, that should do it. Thank you for that advice, Mr. McCaskill. Well. I have grading--"

"As do I, " I put in, as accommodating as can be imagined.

"But now there's a question I have for you. I've seen your school, and I'd like you to see mine. We're holding a dance, Saturday next week. Could I see you there?"

She grew as intent as if I'd thrown her a major problem in multiplication. "It's early to say." Seeing my hope plummet, she provided me a half-smile to grapple it back up. "But possibly--"

"I could come for you."

"That won't be necessary."

"Oh, no trouble."

"But it would be." She was looking at me a bit askance, as if wondering how a grown man could not see that an extra stint on horseback equaled an inconvenience for him. Anna Ramsay plainly could out-teach me in spelling and geography, but there was at least one variety of arithmetic she didn't yet understand.

"I'm sure others from Noon Creek will be attending," she elucidated for me, "and I can come with them."

Come in a congregation, come by your lovely lone self, come dogback or come in a purple carriage with wheels of gold, but just come. Aloud, I granted: "A sensible solution. I'll see you then, on the night."

When Rob next came over, he greeted me with: "And how is life among you schoolkeepers?" ⁴ Already. The way news flew in a country with so few tongues to relay it, I never would comprehend.

change "What can ..."

"What can I tell you, you seem to know at least as much about my doings as I do."

"Just because there's a fresh path worn this deep"--he indicated to his knee--"between the South Fork schoolhouse and the Noon Creek schoolhouse, I thought I might inquire."

"Well, you have." But I couldn't stay miffed where Anna was concerned. "She needed some help on a geography matter."

"Geography," Rob mused. "Now that's a new word for it."

However far gone Rob thought I was down romance's knee-deep road, he didn't know half of it. I was Anna dizzy, in an Anna tizzy.

INSERT: Angus's mood, hopes

You could have counted the next ten days on my face. I went from remorse at how long it would be until I laid eyes on Anna again, to fevers that I wouldn't be prepared when I did. One morning I was gravely giving arithmetic when Susan Duff pointed out that I already had done so, not an hour before. And I suppose all the South Fork pupils were startled by the onslaught of geography that hit them.

One thing I did know for dead-certain, and this was that my schoolhouse was going to be ready to dance. At the close of class that Friday I prevailed on Davie Erskine to stay after and

help me, and we moved the rows of desks along the walls and pushed my desk into a corner. Davie took out the stove ashes while I filled lanterns and trimmed wicks. There never has been a boy enthusiastic about a broom, so I next swept the floor myself in solid Medicine Lodge swamping style and put Davie to wiping the windows with old copies of the Choteau Quill.

"But Mr. McCaskill, it'll be dark out, why do the windows need to be clean?"

"On account of the moonbeams, Davie. You've got to let the moonbeams in on a dance, or people's feet will stick to the floor. Did you not know moonbeams are slick as soap, Davie?"

Davie gaped at me as if I already was askate on moonbeams, but he did the windows fine. Next I had him wash the blackboard, then fill our bucket with fresh drinking water from the creek. I swept and hummed, dusted and hummed, I even straightened the pictures of George and Abraham and gave them each a hum of joy, they always looked like they needed cheer.

"Do you know this old tune, Davie" I asked, for it seemed to me a dim prospect that anyone should go through life knowing only songs of Texans and horses. "You don't? That's odd, for it seems to be addressed to you."

"Me?"

"Surely. Listen to it.

*low
too dim a
3mo wonderful
thing
left*

Dance, dance, Davie lad
and whistle, Willie Young!
There's sheep's head in our pot
and you'll get the tongue!

Davie whipped through the last of his tasks as if afraid my lunacy might be catching. "Is there anything more, Mr. McCaskill?"

"You've more than earned supper, Davie. And thank you the world, for your help here." I fished in my pocket and handed him a coin. From the size of Davie's eyes it was more of a coin than I'd intended, but no matter.

There was a thing more I wanted done, but I needed to be the doer. I went to the freshly washed blackboard and in my best hand, which was an urchin's scrawl compared to Anna Ramsay's, wrote large:

Dancing at the rascal fair,
try it only if you dare,
hoof and shoe, stag and mare,
dancing at the rascal fair.

By last light of Saturday, the sun behind a peak called Phantom Woman and dusk graying the valley, people came. Rob and Judith. The Duffs and Erskines. I scattered oatmeal on the floor to help the moonbeams with our gliding. George Frew as ever was our fiddler, and the night began with the high beautiful tune of Green Glens of Strathspay. I took a diplomatic first turn with Mavis

toward convincing her that while I might never run a school the way she did, my dancing made up for it. Archie and Grace Findlater came. The Shepherd's Schottische. The Hahns and Petersons and Van Bebbers came. The Herring Lasses' Reel. The Roziers from down the main creek, the Kuuvuses and Sedgwicks from town, they came and came.

The first time we stopped to blow, Rob glanced over his shoulder to be sure Mavis Milgrim Frew was nowhere in hearing and declared, "This place dances better since you're the schoolkeeper. What, have you put bed springs under the floor?"

I was gazing around fondly, awaiting what--who--I knew would come. Must come. "Owe it to George, not me. He fiddles better as a married man."

Judith put in, "There's a lesson there for you, Angus."

"You mean if I married, I'd be able to play the fiddle? Judith, that's surprising. What would I need to do to be able to play the piano?"

Rob laughed and batted my shoulder while Judith mocked a huff and declared: "Angus, you are just impossible." Ah, Judith, but I no longer was. I was purely possible. I was possibility with its wings ready, these days. "You have me right," I mollified Judith though, "yet would you dance with me anyhow? Rob, there's paper and pen in my desk there, if you'd care to jot down for yourself how Judith and I do this."

"I'm lending her to you with two sound feet, so bring her back unbroken, hear?"

Lucas
+
Nancy?

"Unbroken, nothing. She'll be downright improved." And Judith and I swung away together, Rob's two closest people in this world, who once had kissed hotly at one of these gatherings and could grin a little rue at each other that we never would again.

On and on the music flowed and the sweat rolled. Thank heaven George Frew's fiddling arm was as oaken as the rest of him. Sedge taught us a square dance called Bunch to the Middle and we danced it until the floor would remember every step of it.

By the holy, I loved these people. This night I loved all of Scotch Heaven, the Two Medicine country, Montana, America, the sky over and the earth under. Who could not?

What I loved strongest of all came through the door in a dark blue skirt and white shirtwaist and an ivory brooch at her throat. Anna. And her mother and father and others from Noon Creek, the Wainwrights and Egans and Isaac Reese, all come in one wagon, and now entering our tuneful school eager for the reward of that ride.

"Welcome across the waters," Rob called out to this delegation and drew a laugh from all. The South Fork and North Fork and Noon Creek taken together, you could still skim your hat across.

"Brought the Ramsays along to translate for us," gruffed the rancher Thad Wainwright. "I might've known, the only heaven I'd get into I have to learn to talk Scotch to do it."

"God works in mysterious ways, Thad, yet we're pretty sure he does wear a kilt," Rob assured him.

That was more than the Duffs and a few others could listen to,

improved

so onto the dance floor they stepped. They were right, too, for why stand talking when you can be dancing?

I bided my time for a small eternity--it must have been fully the next two tunes' worth--until I saw a chance to go over and greet Anna alone. "I see your chalk keeps talking after school, too," she said of my rascal fair verse in white on the blackboard.

"It must have caught the habit somewhere. Do you know, that chalk took me by the hand as I was walking past and made me write that?"

"I suppose you objected strenuously all the while?"

"Objecting is a thing I try not to believe in, particularly the strenuous kind. Just for example, I'm hoping you won't object to a turn around the floor with me right now? Sir Patrick MacWhirr wasn't meant to be stood to."

A flicker went through her steady eyes, but if that was hesitation I'll never mind a dose so small. Here came something else I'd hoped, her sidelong smile. Then, writing in the air as if onto her schoolroom blackboard, she pronounced for me with vast deliberation: "unobjectionable." And onto the dance floor I pranced with her.

To Noroway, To Noroway,

to Noroway over the foam;

the King's fair bride from Noroway --

oh, Sir Pat, Sir Pat, Sir Pat, Sir Pat!--

'Tis thee must bring her home!

"I hope there's a floor left for my pupils, after tonight."

"If there's not, you will have to teach outside like the ancient Greeks."

"Outside, were they. Small wonder all they ever knew how to talk was Greek. Think the tongues they'd speak if they'd gone to school to the pair of us." She had to laugh, and so did my heart. Anna was alive with loveliness, she was mine for as long as I could make the moment. "And what would they think of this at the Brechin Dame School?"

I saw the new moon, late yester e'en,
with the old moon in her arm;
and if we go to sea, my dear queen--
oh, dear queen, dear queen, dear queen, dear queen!--
I fear we must come to harm!

"They would think this Scotch Heaven of yours is a shameless place. Cavorting in a place of learning. See up there, even your Presidents think so." The jounce of the dancing had tilted Washington and Lincoln toward each other, and they did look like two old streetcorner solemns, confiding the world's latest waywardness to each other.

"I hope that's not what you think."

"If a schoolhouse is the only place big enough for a dance, then the schoolhouse should be used."

"And so we'll be dancing next at Noon Creek, will we?"

I particularly meant the two of us. She only granted, "The

school board has the say of any dance. But I'll not object." ^

The sails were hoist on Mononday morn,
the wind came up on Wenensday;
it blew and blew and blew so forlorn--
oh, Sir Pat and Queen, Sir Pat and Queen!--
blew Sir Pat and Queen from Noroway. ^

My aim that night was to dance with Anna enough times to ratify us as a couple, yet not so many as to alarm her. So I didn't mind--much--when Allan Frew took a turn with her. From his doggish look toward me I knew that Allan knew I would pound him back to milkteeth if he tried seriously to get in my way with Anna. She even went a few rounds with Isaac Reese and made him and his drooping mustache look almost presentable. Then Rob danced with Anna to Brig of Dee while I did with Judith, and I saw Judith's eyebrow inch up at Rob's nonstop chat there, but I knew that was just him being him. I thanked my stars that Rob was not in the running with me for Anna. Indeed, peer along the lovelit road ahead as far as I could, I saw no one else who was. Which was wonrous and sobering and exhilarating and bewildering and intimidating and sublime all in the same pot together. ^

"What, no bagpipes?" Thad Wainwright wondered. No drums, no bules, no tinsel tunes of war. Lord of Mercy, when was the rest of mankind going to quit thinking of us as wild Highlanders? ^

"We thought there's enough wind in this country without making more," I told Thad.

"It's kind of disappointing though, you know? With all you Scotchmen here under one roof, Mary and I thought we were going to see some real flinging." The Noon Creek rancher chuckled a regret and moved on.

My verse on the blackboard spoke to me over Thad's retreating shoulder. It made me remember aloud to Rob: "Fergus the Dervish."

Rob roared a laugh. "Fergus and his Highland whoops! He'd show Thad some steps."

"Why don't we? The two of us saw Fergus enough times at the rascal fair."

"You think we can?"

"Man, is there something we can't do?"

"We haven't found it yet. You're right, you're right, it will take Barclay and McCaskill to show these Noon Creek geezers what dancing is."

"McCaskill and Barclay," I corrected him, "but you're correct enough other than that. See if our many George can plan Tam Lin, why not, while I tend to something else." ^ M

Apprehensively, Judith began: "Now, you two--"

"No, love, it's we three, you're into this too. And whoever Angus can inveigle into risking her--" ^

I was across the room before my feet knew they were moving. I hadn't a wisp of a clue as to how this person Anna would react to a

dancing exhibition. Here was the time of times to find out.

"It's all for the cause of education, of course," I prattled to her while those direct blue eyes worked on me. "Instruction for the world at large, think of it as."

The smile I wanted began to sidle onto her face. "I'll believe you," granted Miss Anna Ramsay and lightly grasped the arm I proffered, "but thousands would not."

Oh, you must beware, maidens all,
who wear gold in your hair
don't come or go by Linfield Hall
for young Tam Lin is there.

Dark and deep lay the wood of night
and eerie was the way
as fair Janet with hair so bright
toward Linfield Hall did stray.

I grant that other nationalities are known to dance, but it is my hypothesis that they must have learned how from the Scots. You can't but admit that a land of both John Knox and Robert Burns is nimble, and we like to think that quality comes out on us at both ends, head and feet. Earlier that night I danced a reel with Flora Duff, who was wide as any other two women there, and she moved like a rumor. And now Rob and Judith and Anna and I were the four-hearted dancer of all dancers, gliding to and from, following the weave of the tune, saluting the night and life with our every

motion and capping them all with the time-stopping instant when Rob and I faced one another, each with a hand on a hip ^{and} the other bent high abovehead, and our two throats as one flung ^{the} exultant Highland cry, hiiyuhh!

Her skirt was of the grass-green silk
her cloak of velvet fine
about her neck so white as milk
her fox-red furs entwine.

About the dead hour of the night
she heard Tam's bridles ring
and Janet was as glad of that
as any earthly thing.

Put away geography and numeration and the Presidents from yon to hither, pupils of mine and of my partner in whirl Anna, and write for us books of that dance. Scissor her lovely profile down the left of your pages and in eternal ink say how forthright she is even when set to music. Miss Ramsay seems to look into the face of the tune in the air and say, yes, you are what music should be. Make an exact report, for I will want to know from this moment on, the way she and I blend into a single dancing figure and then ^h swiftly into two again and next meld with Rob and Judith. You will please find a line somewhere there, too, for the Scotch Heaven serenade this schoolroom has never heard before tonight: hiiyuhhh!

improve meter

She heard the horseman's silv'ry call,
'Come braid your golden hair
in the fine manse of Linfield Hall
for I, Tam Lin, am there.'

She went within that hall of Lin
fair Janet on her ride
and now you maidens know wherein
dwelt Tam Lin and his bride.

HiiiiYUHHHH! Our final whoop, Rob and I agreed, could have been heard by old Fergus the Dervish himself wherever he was cavorting in Scotland just then.

I got myself beside Anna as the goodbying was going on, and said: "You know, of course, tonight was a mark the Noon Creek dance will have to match."

"We will strive," she answered.

"It'll not be easy. Much of the music of the world got used up here tonight."

"We'll dust off what's left, you needn't worry. By now I know you're not a man for standing."

"There, you see? A mere few hours in my schoolroom and you've already learned a thing." Her parents were waiting at the door, I was drawing heavy looks from her mother.

"Well. Goodnight, Anna," I finally had to say.

"Yes." A bit slow from her too, I noted with hope.

more dialogue etc

"Goodnight, Angus."

But before she could turn, I blurted: "Anna, I'd like to call on you."

That direct look of hers. "Then why don't you?"

A fly buzzed uselessly against the window of the Ramsay parlor, herald of my audience thus far with Anna's parents.

"So, Mr. McCaskill, you are of Forfar," speaks the main dragon. "That surprises me." Margaret Ramsay, mother of Anna, looked as if she could out-general Wellington. A drawn, bony sort of woman with none of Anna's adventurous curves, she seemed to have room in herself only for skepticism toward the male race. Beside her sat probably her prime reason for that. Peter Ramsay was a plump placid man who sat with his hands resting on his belly, the first finger of his right hand gripped his left, in the manner a cow's teat would be grasped. Ready to milk one hand with his other and evidently content to spend a lifetime at it. It stretched my imagination several ways beyond usual, as to how these two beings could have made Anna.

I was trying to be careful with my tongue, but: "I'd be interested to know, Mrs. Ramsay, in what aspect I look so different from other Forfar folks. My face, is it? I should have put on my other one."

If vinegar can smile, Margaret Ramsay smiled. "Of course I meant surprised to find someone else from Forfar so near at hand here in Montana."

"You were schooled where?" she asked.

"At a 'venture school in Nethermuir."

"Anna and I both matriculated from the Dame School in Brechin."

"So I understand." I am a famous scholar, see./Graddy-ated and trickle-ated, me./I've been to Rome in Germany/and seen the snows of Araby. I swallowed that safely away and put forth: "Education is the garment that never wears, they say."

"And what of your family?"

I looked squarely at her. "Dead," I said.

Margaret Ramsay regarded me. "I mean, of course, what of them in life."

My father the ironhand, encased in his deafness; my mother the mill worker...Try sometime to put that into parlor speech. Anna was interested and encouraging--Anna could do me no wrong--but it was uphill all the way, trying to tell of the wheelshop years.

The Ramsay place all but touched the mountains. Until humans learned to hang to the side of a crag with one hand and tend livestock with the other, here was as far as settlement could go. I hoped these Ramsays knew what they were in for when winter's winter, which is to say January and February, came howling down off the Rockies onto them. I could see the rock face of Jericho Reef through the curtain, the window where the fly was 00ing. "You've seen Bell Rock, off from Arbroath?"

"I passed it on a schooner once," spoke Peter Ramsay, his full contribution to that day's conversation. "Surprising."

west in
Two
Mead
entry

tumbling
BR
lighthouse

I told of Alexander McCaskill at Bell Rock, and if the impression was left that my great-grandfather had been the right hand of the colossal Stevenson throughout that construction, I didn't mind.

"Interesting," granted Margaret Ramsay.

"I'll walk out with you," Anna said when it came my time to go.

Air was never more welcome to me. Whoof. Mons Meg Ramsay was going to be something to put up with, but Anna was worth all.

As soon as we were out of sight around a corner of the house, I put her hand on the back of mine and urged, "Quick, give me a pinch."

She lightly did and inquired, "And what was that for?"

"I needed to be sure my skin is still on me."

Anna had to smile. "You did well. Even Mother thought so, I could tell."

"Well enough to be rewarded by my favorite teacher?"

Anna let me kiss her. Then she gave my arm a squeeze, and went back to the house.

As Scorpion and I rounded Breed Butte, the places on my body counted themselves up. That joking pinch, the considered meeting of our lips, the oo squeeze of my arm. Not as great a total as I was capable of imagining, but a promising sum.

more?

change?
Hard Meg

1

"Men think they know every inch of life."

"You've met every man there is in the world, have you?"

"A reasonable sample, I'd say."

"There's your problem then ~~You're~~ hanging about with the

reasonable ones. They're notoriously short on imagination. Show

a reasonable man a mermaid and he'll notice the half that's fish."

There was fresh blood in my veins, brewed by the makers of harem potions.

Club's farcical combat in the David Brown era needs an incisive neutral observer. If we, and Ansel Adams, are lucky in the eventual photographer, a more complicated and compelling soul may emerge from under the shadow of that Stetson.

Meanwhile, anecdotes have to sustain us, and they do. With

wonderful amiability Adams lets Alfred Steigitz and Georgia

O'Keefe steal the scene whenever they show up. Tales are told of

dozens of fine photographers and other artists--and a hilarious one

about the mobile magnificence of Darryl F. Zanuck. Here in the last

public words Adams is permanently angry at only a chosen few--fellow

photographers William Mortensen (exponent of allegorical portraiture

that Adams deemed "fuzzy-wuzzy") and Edward Steichen ("As a friend

said, 'he has the ability to make women cry and he reveals in it.'"),

and President Ronald Reagan, former employer of James Watt. The

press may have won a p.r. moment in 1983 by actually sitting down

with Adams the symbolic environmentalist for 55 minutes, but Adams

now gets to aim an arrow at posterity: "I was negatively impressed

with Reagan's failure to discuss or challenge my opinions at every

turn...The flow of bludge from the Reagan administration is a blot

upon our history of literacy."

For all the environmental spokespersonship that capped a career of

outdoor life, Adams will know what would give him his own mark in

our history. The photographs, the hauntingly luminous photographs.

Here in their half-century panoply, Adams' pictures have never

INSERT: narrative of the dance

--Angus courting Anna; possibly his mood

The world and its price of wool and lambs was not what I wanted to think about, only Anna.

Three times in the past week different people had told me the joke about the sheepman who shipped some of his lambs to Chicago to test the market, received a telegram from the stockyard buyer which read REGRET TO SAY SALE OF YOUR LAMBS YESTERDAY BROUGHT ONLY ENOUGH TO PAY HALF YOUR SHIPPING COSTS, I HAD TO PAY OTHER HALF FOR YOU, and telegraphed back DO NOT WORRY, AM COMPENSATING YOU BY SENDING TWICE AS MANY LAMBS TODAY.

Rob and Lucas and I had our war council on the west ridgeline of Breed Butte, where we could keep an eye on the grazing bands of sheep. There they were, six years of striving and effort, and currently worth about as much as that many 00s.

"If we could just sell them as scenery," Lucas jested, but wryly.

Lucas was looking older these days. 1893 had put extra age on a lot of people in Montana. "So, lads, we have sheep galore. Now what are we going to do with them?"

"It's going to be a ^{bit of a} tight year," Rob affirmed, which was getting

to be an annual echo. "Maybe our tightest yet. But prices can't stay

down in the well forever. People still have to wear clothes, they still

have to eat meat."

I squinted at the warm June sun. "But how soon can we count on them getting cold and hungry?"

"All right, all right, you've said the ~~"There's the big question."~~ big question. But we've got to hang on until prices turn around. There's one thing we can try."

"And that is?"

"Keep the wethers one more year and pray for the wool price to come up. What would you say to that, Angus?"

"The first thing is, how do we handle that many sheep this summer?"

"Herd them ~~ourselves~~ ourselves," said Rob. "I'll take all the wethers in one band if you'll take the ewes and lambs. Judith will have kittens about my doing it, she'll have to manage everything else by herself. But she'll just have to, she married Breed Butte when she married me. Angus, I'll tell you now, you're lucky to be your own boss in life."

Hard them ourselves.

leaders' pay?

I calculated all Rob had said, ~~which was implying~~ I was
fairly sure I could survive another year, with my teaching wage
and just myself to support. But I intended life to include not just
myself; if I was to marry Anna, keep the homestead, start ~~a~~ our family,
by the kind of feeling that comes up out of the stone when I strike
it. Then all throughout the day's sculpting, Angel keeps stroking
the stone with his fingers, cupping caresses to it with his palm.
"Say I want to do a flow of feathers over the back; I may look at
it, but I'll also spend some time feeling it. And sometimes the
feeling will say, hey, this isn't quite right."
"The heavens are not opening up," Angel is quick to disclaim
about this mysterious laying on of hands, "the gods are not touching
that rock." Rather, years of daily dedication to stonework are
making themselves felt; what a poet has called the long devotion of
the muscles to the bones. This durable delicacy of the way he works
into the stone is a remarkable refinement of power and dimension in
the same way Angel himself is. He is what might be called a medium
helping of his man; solidly muscled, thick wherever you look at him,
but overbuilt not as supremely huge as you might expect of someone who
spends a good part of his days moving heavy rock around. He is
thoroughly serious about life, particularly his manifestations in
art and nature, but he also has a room-filling laugh and a hopeless
pendant for telephoning his friends in strange accents; and when
telling the tale of one sculpture or another, he is perfectly apt to

improve

"All of us of Scotch Heaven are hanging on by our fingernails
this summer."

"Yes, I've heard. Almost everyone along Noon Creek is doing the
same." Including this Ramsay household under the unsure hand of that
dabster father of hers, I had no doubt.

Matter will mend

"I'll see little of you ~~the~~ these next weeks." But as much as
I can, that also said.

"I'll miss our ^stime together. We schoolkeepers are a race of
our own, I once heard someone say."

Time to test the water. *Anna* "I hope we can make up ~~for it~~ in
the future. *any time we lose to*

improve

"The future has a way of telling us when it wants to, and no sooner,
Angus."

for now?

That wasn't yes. But it wasn't no, either. Amply good enough, ~~to take with me through~~
~~for the summer~~
on the journey of the OO terrain that was Anna Ramsay.

With Rob and Lucas's two bands as well as mine and Rob's, we were having to ~~go~~ graze higher into the mountains. I took our band, wishing every moment that there were two of me, one to herd the sheep and the other to shepherd Anna.

I had been born twins

Those high weeks,

I had time to think how it would be. When we brought the sheep down (just before school started), I could ~~go~~^{go} to Anna at once, ask her to marry. It could be then, it could be at Christmas, but either case... We could talk, whether she wanted to keep teaching at Noon Creek until our first baby--it wasn't that strong a distance from my homestead, our homestead.

as lost as Scorpioned trout

So much was possible

Rob was the one with wife and children; my turn would come. He did most of the weekly campending. The day I took a turn--"Man, from the look of you, you'd better go down for air," Rob urged.--

"Give her a squeeze for me and the rest of mankind"--I honed the

time every way I could to make an hour or so to see Anna. But at

to see if he knew their whereabouts, but

the Ramsay homestead, no one. I rode to Isaac Reese's, no one. On

Isaac either

^{the} ^{ranch} Wainwrights', deserted too, which began to tell me a gathering of

at least 1

some manner was going on. ~~Finally~~ The Wainwrights' choreboy emerged

horse rode

from the 00 to tell me bronc-riding was occurring at the Egan ranch,

who had any sense

everyone was there. I squinted at the sun, low by now, and saw

a bit of sense

I no longer had the time. It galled, but a mountainslope of sheep
were waiting, there was nothing to be done. Make up for it when

I next saw Anna. (line of poetry?)

rock and declares:

My final summer alone, this. The point ~~at which~~ of life at
which the trade was to be made, my solitary wonder at life and
where it took a person, for becoming half of two. You I think
need the right partner in this old life, Angus. You spoke true,
Lucas, and now it was happening.

There would be the everlasting astonishment of how Anna and I
had coincided, from a handful of miles apart in Scotland, where we
not had ~~never~~ met and may well never have, to coming together in this
far place Montana. And now there would be McCaskills derived of
Nethermuir and Brechin. I could imagine waking beside Anna every
morning the rest of our lives and looking at her face and thinking,
how did this come to be?

The valley of the North Fork never looked better to me, not even that first day I had ridden onto the knob bluff and gazed down into it.

The sheep grazed along the ridgeline. I lost no time turning Scorpion toward Noon Creek; enough had gone with the summer already.

On hunch, I went not to the Ramsay place but to the schoolhouse. With the beginning of school so near, I'd have bet hard money Anna would be readying her schoolroom, and she was. I patted her sorrel ~~rewardfully~~ ^{more} saddlehorse as I stepped past and toward the schoolhouse door.

"Is this where a person ~~can~~ ⁵ come to learn?" I called in.

She turned around from so quickly ~~the~~ her braid swung onto her shoulder. She looked up from ~~OO~~ the blackboard. "Angus ~~xxxxxx~~ I wasn't expecting you yet." I'll tell you now, that braid was the rope to my heart.

I went to her and held her at arm's length and simply looked.

"The mountains must have agreed with ~~xxx~~ you."

^{more conversational}
"I came to trade them for better company with a Brechin voice."

"You did, did you. ^{It} can tell you you've been missed at dances."

She held me

They were
get enough
company, but
had to come
and hear

"And what's the word for that? Write it for ~~me~~ me, Miss Noon Creek Schoolkeeper.

"Angus McCaskill who can read the air, are you? We shall see."

She began tracing

"An unfair advantage," I protested. "You can't expect me to read your old word backwards." I moved around behind her, peering over her right shoulder, my hands lightly on her shoulders. "Now, then. Write

your utmost, Anna Ramsay."

Anna stood ~~was~~ stock-
still. "Angus..."

What we suddenly were saying to each other was with lips, but words were nowhere involved.

is still
trying
to read...

Then

~~I don't know how we got that far, I truly don't.~~ ^{do not} Our kissing

took a wild blind leap. The next thing I knew my lips had followed

Anna's neck down, the top of her dress was open and the feminine

undergear was somehow breached--her breasts were there, ~~breasts~~ ^{bare} as babes,

and I was kissing them. Anna's hand was under my shirt, her fingers

spread and moving back and forth on my spine.

I looked up at her and her other hand came to my face, to the

corner of my mouth. She looked intent, ready to say something. But

she didn't speak.

Why ~~didn't I~~ ^{didn't I} go back to those breasts? Why didn't ~~we--or I, since~~ ^{we--or I, since}

~~it seemed to be up to me--then and there~~ continue the course we were so well started on? I suppose because it

was up to me. ~~That~~ That I straightened up and moved my attention to

her hair and lips because

Her fingers found my ear. At last I felt a gentle tug there. "Angus,

we can't. Not here."

My urge was to keep on with the kissing and the divesting of ~~my~~

clothing. But there was that inward Anna, the one I wasn't yet sure of;

still

if I kept on it wasn't clear whether I would gain that Anna or lose her.

Something great was caught at the back of my throat.

find that kissing well.

whiteness, nipple

We have to talk.

it was count forward

"All right. Just let me hold you." Her hands hesitated where they had begun to close the front of her dress; and then they were clutching my back again, the two of us snug together, just being there clasped. Out of ~~my~~ my spell of happiness I heard myself say: "Talk, you mentioned."

seems to me
"It's a poor second-best, but yes, we can talk. I'll even begin. Anna, marry me."

I felt her tighten *even more* against me, the twin globes *of her breasts* wonderful. She said into my shoulder: "I have to tell you, Angus, you're not the first to ask."

with my right hand Anna's *arms & cross* made up for "I suppose not." I stroked ~~her~~ braids while my arms ~~stretched~~ ~~around~~ the past weeks of not holding her. "If

We rocked gently against each other of. I'll know floor had begun to sway, we did care which.

INSERT: as they tidy themselves, Angus asks her to marry him.

"Angus, you're not the first to ask."

"I suppose not. If the male half of the world has any sense at
since you were the age of twelve.
all, it's been trooping to you in regimental file with that question.

But Anna, love, first isn't what I had in mind--I just ^{want} hope to be
the last."

She didn't smile. She was looking me in the eye. "Isaac has
asked me."

I nearly chuckled and asked her how many words of how many
different tongues he did it in. But her face stopped me. Lord of
mercy, had Anna been so overkind as not to tell him outright no?

"Angus," she said.

"Angus," she said, "I've told Isaac yes."

—

I rode away doomed.

Not around Breed Butte toward home, because I could not face the
^{everlasting}
new canyon of emptiness waiting for me there. Down the Noon Creek road
toward Gros Ventre I reined Scorpion. In ordinary times it was a
pleasant straight-as-a-rope route along the benchland, roofs of the

Noon Creek cattle ranches below, but this day I wouldn't have given them a glance if they were the castles of the moon. The tatters that were left of me had all they could do to cling there onto Scorpion's back, hang in the saddle and be a sack for the disbelief. Angus, Anna saying, there in the schoolhouse and again and again in my mind, I am fond of you, I enjoy you. You know I find you attractive --the memory

of her open dress came into the schoolroom air between us. But I'm afraid it's Isaac I feel love for. Just that way. As if we two men were jars of jam on the table and she was saying, this is strawberry, this is plum, I'll have plum.

I can imagine
"rest"
of my life e.

She was marrying him for the sake of those parents of hers, to tie the leaky boat of Ramsay finances to the ark of Isaac. She was marrying him because she felt sorry for him, gabbler him. She was marrying him because she had temporarily lost her mind; amnesia; a blow on the head; the instant she came out of this sad mad drift of her senses...

She was marrying Isaac because she chose to. I knew that, to the bone. Knew it indelibly and with no possible mistake because Anna Ramsay in her honesty had made plain the difficulty of her decision.

no #

Angus, you are a rare man. Maybe the rarest I've ever met.

Her half-smile seemed wistful, or did I imagine. The frank faction ^{though,} of her ~~went~~ right on to say: But I think you ~~you~~ don't know yet what

you want of life. But I did, did, did. Everything I wanted was standing here telling me she was marrying someone else.

And you do, I said, and it's name is Isaac?

How can I ever explain? Angus, you are one who wants to see how many ways life can rhyme. I just want it to add up sensibly.

more?

Scorpion was snorty and nervous, our shadow a restless one on the road in front of us from his head-tossing and twitching. If truth could show itself as sunlight ^{throws down} ~~shows~~ our outlines, there would have been a third form there in our composite shadow--the dread that rode me.

There is nothing else to call it, a dread as harsh and bottomless as ^{smothering} the one I had felt ~~aboard the steamship~~ ^{those} the first Atlantic

nights out from Scotland. For what was tearing at me was not simply that Anna had turned me down. The worse part was that I still loved, defended her against myself even as I derided her reasons in favor of

Isaac. I still loved that woman. And if this day had not changed that fact, what ever could?

#

"Angus, you look as if the dog ate your supper."

I gave Lucas an answering eyeshot that sent his stubs reaching for a large glass for me.

~~I gave him a look.~~ Lucas Barclay, author of my homesteading venture, commandant of the Medicine Lodge and the tall house behind and Nancy in that house. ~~He didn't even have hands,~~ Isaac Bedammed

Reese barely had approximate English. ^{Yet} Here was I, supposedly complete ^{but} and yet womanless, ^{exact} less the one woman I wanted.

Misunderstanding the situation as

I explained to Lucas in the one word: "Anna." ~~Thinking it was~~

something that could be mollified, he said: "A spat, ay? Don't be so down, you're not the first--"

"She told me to go chase myself," I told him. I told him about ~~about~~

the Anna-Isaac wedding-to-be, told

him my bafflement, told him a couple of ^{rapid} drinks' worth.

"Bad," he agreed. "But you will mend, you know."

I wanted to blaze to him that this wasn't like Rob being infatuated with Nancy, he'd sing a different tune if he were me right now. For that matter, something of the sort must have blazed, because Lucas now was steering me to the weaning corner of the bar and casting keep-away

one not of all

looks at the few other customers. "Another glass or so will do you more good than harm, but that's the end of the night for you then."

A hear him
Harm, did ~~he~~ say.

(no 9)

From that day when Rob and I walked into this Medicine Lodge and Lucas laid his lack of hands before us to see, I had wondered what so ~~maimed~~ ^{harm} a life was like, how Lucas ~~felt~~ ^{must feel}, true and deep, about ~~enduring the rest of existence~~ ^{enduring the rest of existence} having to go through ~~life~~ as less than he had been. Now Lucas was the one who did not, could not, know anything near the full sum of

~~what I felt about deprivation.~~ ^{damage} Come put on my bones, Lucas. Come

and wear Angus McCaskill like borrowed clothes, let our hearts pump in,

~~take them snug against yours, let our hearts pump in tune, our eyes sight together at this thing life.~~ Come stand here under my skin

~~here under my skin and find what this is like, I will learn your loss and you mine.~~ ~~Come put on~~

"Take it slow, now. Both on this whiskey and yourself."

Slow, is it. My whole life is ~~slow~~ ^{as can be now}, indeed it's ~~stopped~~ ^{halted},

bogged...

~~man, you're full.~~
~~"Angus, you've had enough."~~

*Perry,
Dad Smith,
take him
to house*

This was my Bell Rock. My time of stone, with obliteration all around.

The ocean was coming to cover me, ready to put salt pennies on my eyes,

and it may as well, why live if this was what life amounted to. Land

stood a dozen miles distant from Bell Rock; yes, that was ^{the ever} same unswimmable

distance, from here in the Medicine Lodge to that Noon Creek schoolroom

where Anna had told me no, Isaac yes.

"Angus, man, you're full. No more of the wet stuff for you tonight.

Sedge and Toussaint, each grab an end of him, can you, and take him

around to the house. Angus, here now, just let the

lads lift you, there's the way. You'll be different in the morning."

Let the tide come. The Atlantic, the Annalantic. Take my ankles,

shins, knees, rise, damn you, bless you, sweep me off this reef, blanket

me with water, arms and throat and eyes and higher yet, the whole

hopeless thing I am.

wait
Lucas
Rob?
Toussaint?

Sedge
wait

Messages from rocks have lined our lives for at least the last
two hundred centuries; in the Pascaux Gave of northern France were

games that erupt before the class day takes everyone captive. I turned from the window for one last inventory of my schoolroom. Desk rows across the room. Blackboard and a roll-down map of the world fastened above. Framed portraits of Washington and Lincoln staring stoically at each other on the far wall. I hammered days of nails when this schoolhouse was built, I had come here with Ninian and Willy many times to tend to our teacher, I had danced on this schoolroom's floor, mended its roof. Yet I tell you, it was a place foreign to my eyes as I waited for the minute when it would fill with pupils. My pupils.

For the dozenth time I looked at the alarm clock ticking on my solitary desk at the front of the schoolroom. This time it told me I had to ring the bell to begin school, even though a significant half of my pupil population hadn't yet appeared.

Ring I did.

In trooped the South Fork boys and girls.

I hemmed and hawed and had them take temporary seats until the others arrived.

But still no others.

Accident? Boycott? Jest of God? Possibilities trotted around in me until I needed to do what I had been resisting, retreat out onto the porch and peer up the North Fork road.

Here they came, the child cavalry of Scotch Heaven. The three Findlaters on a fat white horse named Snowy. Susan Duff regal on one of Ninian's blood bay geldings. Jimmy Spedderson on a beautiful

blazeface black worth more than the rest of the Speddersons' homestead combined. Davy Erskine on his fast-stepping roan with small sister Rachel clinging behind him.

I let out a breath of thanks. But to show them I did not intend for tardiness to become habit, I stood conspicuously waiting while they put their horses on picket ropes. Already there on a length of grazing tether was the Dantley mare Patch that I still rode, and with all our horses picketed around the schoolhouse, the scene suddenly hit me as one of life's instants I had been through before--Rob and I gawking at the Floweree outfit's cow camp the day we arrived green as peas into Gros Ventre. I reminded myself how greatly more veteran in life I was by now, and tried to believe it in the face of what advanced on me here, Susan Duff.

She poised below me as if she had borne the message from Aix to Ghent. "We cut through our lower field and couldn't get the gate open and the top loop was too tight and barbwire besides," she reported in funeral tones. "My father will need to fix that gate." Unaccountably my spirits rose as I thought of Ninian having to deal with this daughter. "Meg Findlater's nose is running and she doesn't have a hanky, and Davie Erskine forgot to bring his and Rachel's lunch." This seemed to conclude Susan's docket, and up the porch steps and into the schoolhouse she marched with the other Scotch Heaven children in a straggle behind her.

I kick myself yet for not anticipating the next snag of that morning, although I am not sure what I could have done about it. My

change

gender. In Scotland schoolmasters were thick on the ground. But here, having a man teacher proved to be an unexpected thought to pupils accustomed to Miss Milgrim. The larger boys were plainly restless about me, and I was afraid little Meg Findlater's eyes would pop from her head every time I leaned far down to bring my handkerchief to the rescue of her nose.

My predecessor still governessed that schoolroom in another way, too. After I had everyone sorted and seated and the littlest ones were more or less occupied with the new things called desks and books, I started on my upper grades in what I thought was peerless emulation of Socrates, "Tell me, anyone please, the Presidents from Washington to Lincoln."

I drew back stares.

There I stood wondering what had taken their tongues, until Susan Duff informed me that it was the practice of Miss Milgrim to tell the pupils such matters as the Presidents to Lincoln, while they listened.

"That's as may be, Susan. But I look very little like Miss Milgrim, don't I, and so I need to do things my own way. Now who'll tell the Presidents, Washington to Lincoln?"

A silence deep as a corner of eternity. As the silence yawned on, my only immediate hope was Susan again. But a look at her told me she had lent me all the instruction she currently intended to.

I despaired and was starting to reach for the chalk and begin listing Presidents, anything to stir this congealed schoolroom, when I heard:

"Hickory Jackson."

I turned, blinking. Davie Erskine was regarding me with a helpfulness that managed to be vague and earnest at the same time. I'd made mental note to share my lunch with him and his little sister Rachel; this opening effort of Davie's resolved me to give them it all. Taking my surprise for encouragement, the boy visibly searched around in his head some more. After a while:

"Quincy Adams."

Yet another Davie spell of thought--Shakespeare could have written a couple of acts during this one--and:

"Some other Adams."

I was desperately debating within myself whether to shut off this random trickle of Presidents, try to suggest some order into it, or what, when Davie's thoughtseeking gaze lit on the wall portraits.

"Abe Lincoln," he announced to us. "George--"

It was too much for Susan Duff. Up shot her hand.

"Washingtonjohnadamsjefferson," she launched,

"Madisonmonroejohnquincyadams--"

That tiny box of school, on the universe's ocean. How could we in there hope to know enough to get by on, let alone improve the race at all?

I doubt seriously that, when that year's fractions of knowledge gain are added up, any of my South Fork pupils learned nearly as

much as I did. There I stood, newly minted teacher of such topics as the history of the United States of America--with my Scottish schooling which had instructed me thoroughly in the principal events from Robert the Bruce to the Union of the Crowns. My daily margin of American history over my various grades' was the pages I'd scurried through the night before. Fortunately not all the subjects were as lion-sized as history. Even in America lessons in handwriting were lessons in handwriting, and reading was reading. And spelling was spelling except when harbour arrive to this side of the ocean as harbor, tyre as tire, theatre as theater, and sundry other joggled vowels. But geography. The grief of American geography. When it came to geography, my pupils and I had to be strange pickles together. In that schoolroom of mine were children born in Bavaria and Scotland and Norway and Alsace-Lorraine, and others who never had been farther in the world than ten miles down the creek to Gros Ventre. Our sole veteran traveler of the continent we were on was Jimmy Spedderson, seven years of age, who had lived in Missouri, Kansas, North Dakota, Manitoba and now Montana--a life like a skipping stone. Whatever the roll-down map of the whole world proclaimed, every one of us there came from a different earth and knew only the haziest about anyone else's. For me, terra incognita was the 99% of Montana where I had never been. I could instruct my pupils perfectly well that Thomas Carlyle--he of I don't pretend to understand the universe; it's a great deal bigger than I am--originated at Ecclefechan, pronounced Eckle-~~FECK~~'n,

county of Dumfries in southmost Scotland, near to Carlisle and the Solway Firth. But I had to learn along with them the sixteen counties of Montana and the mysterious town names of Ekalaka, Wibaux, Saco, Missoula, Shawmut, Rimini, Ravalli, Ovando...

One geographic inspiration I did have. The piece of the planet that stayed with me as no other, the Atlantic. The Hahn boys and the three Findlaters and Daniel Rozier and Susan Duff and Davie and Rachel Erskine also all remembered crossing the ocean to America. I strived to have them make the other pupils understand that feat of crossing, and to hold it in their own minds ever and ever. And got more than I bargained for when Jenny Findlater hesitantly raised her hand and asked if when I was on the ocean, was I scared any?

"Jenny, I was," I said to Daniel's smirk and the careful gazes of all the others. "An ocean is dangerous enough to be afraid of. As are the rear hooves of our horses out there, and blizzards, and just a number of things in life. But we try to use our judgment and be afraid only when it's worth it, don't we, and then only as much as we have to be. Is that how it was with you, Jenny, when you were on the ocean?" Jenny's vigorous nod carried me from that trouble.

Thank heaven arithmetic is a neutral country. At least I could put addition and subtraction and multiplication and division into my pupils like nails into a shingle roof, pound pound pound pound. Here was once when old Scotland came back to help me out, for when I had been pupil teacher under Adam Willox in Nethermuir he made arithmetic my particular topic: They can become literate from me, Angus, and learn to be numerate from you.

more?

So maybe it was numbers alone that kept me, that school year, from ever riding into the Duff homestead and saying Ninian, start advertising for someone else, this is beyond me. Instead, day upon day I ransacked my brain for how Adam Willox had done things. Then amended nearly all of that, for Adam never had the situation of the Hahns' dog Wagger following them to school and howling by the hour; of keeping track of whose turn it was among the big boys to go to the creek and fill the water bucket; of Einar Peterson's perpetual tendency toward nosebleed and Jenny Findlater's toward hiccups; of having to watch for ticks on everyone including myself.

Of having to deal with Daniel Rozier about the issue of the girls' outhouse.

A country school such as South Fork was not an individual receptacle of knowledge, it was an educational trinity. You saw all three as you came to where the streambed of the North Fork met that of the South Fork and made the main creek--just upstream within a willow-thick bend, the white schoolhouse and behind it the white twin toilets, girls' to the left, boys' to the right. Each waiting to do its duty, they sat there like an attentive hen and two pullets. My problem, or more accurately the girls' problem, was Daniel Rozier's fascination with the possibilities of that left-hand outhouse.

It all began with garter snakes. Most the girls were not normally afraid of them, but go seat yourself appropriately and glance down to find restless green reptiles beside you, and see what you think.

meru

I heard out the girls' lamentations, and made my threats about what would happen to whomever I caught at snakework. But the Rozier homestead was just down the creek from the school, near enough for Daniel to sneak back before or after the rest of us, and try as I did I never could convict Daniel.

Susan Duff, rather than I, ended the snake episode the recess time when she stormed out of the girls' toilet grasping a writhing foot-long serpent by the tail, carried it around to the side of the schoolhouse where Daniel Rozier was in a game of ante-I-over, and whapped him across the bridge of the nose with the thing.

Even if she was the avenging figure of justice, Daniel was livid about being hit by a girl.

"Susan-Duff-you're-worse-than-snot!" he screeched.

"The next snake I find in there I'll hit you with twice," she vowed in return.

And so only two of the trinity were standing when I rode into sight of the South Fork the morning after that. The casualty naturally was the girls' outhouse, flat on its back as a dead beetle. The bad fact now was that even Daniel Rozier at his most indignant wasn't strong enough to tip over a two-hole outhouse; he'd had help from the other boys. It took Daniel and Davie Erskine and the Hahn brothers, conscript labor all, and me to lift the structure upright.

Two mornings later, the girls' outhouse was horizontal again.

By then I knew Daniel Rozier was the sort you could punish until he was jelly and he'd still behave the same. Instead, I opened school that day with the observation: "A freak of nature seems to have struck the girls' outhouse." Smirk from Daniel to Susan Duff, glower from her to him. "Until it comes along again and puts the toilet back up, chivalry will have to be in force. Who'll tell me the spelling of chivalry? Daniel, crack at it, please."

The smirk went and confusion came. "Unngg, ah, is it S-H-O-V-U-L-R-Y?"

"Closer than you might think," I granted. "Susan, enlighten Daniel as to chivalry, please." Which she did as fast as the letters could prance out her mouth.

"Thank you, Susan. Now the definition, at least in this case. The boys will yield their toilet to the girls."

Little Freddie Findlater, a lad with a nervous kidney, had his hand up in an instant. "Where will the boys go, then?"

I directed attention to the willow thicket along the creek. "Like Zeus on Mount Olympus, Freddie, all of outdoors is your throne." Looks were cast toward Daniel Rozier, but the boys sat firm, so to speak, on their outhouse position.

Montana weather being Montana weather, I didn't have to wait long for the day I needed. Squalls were getting up speed in the mountains as I reached into my cupboard that morning, and by noon hard wind and blasts of sleet shot against the schoolhouse windows.

"My eyes must have been big this morning, I brought more than I can eat," I confessed during lunchtime. "Daniel, pass those around please," handing him the big bag of prunes. In groped his paw for the first haul, then the fruit began its fist-diving circle among the other boys.

When the prunes had time for full effect, and boy after boy trooped back in from the bushes as if dragging icicles behind, I decided here was my moment. "I've been meaning to ask, how many of you can stay after and put the outhouse back up?" Where it then held.

"A coyote can too run faster than a dog, Petey Hahn." Jimmy Spedderson's contention wafted in through an open window as I was at my desk cramming that afternoon's American history.

"Can't either. Our dog Wagger runs after coyotes all the time, see."

"Your dog can't catch coyotes! That's a fat lie. Liar, liar, pants on fire!"

"Didn't say he catches them."

"See, then."

"He'd have to run faster to catch them. What he does is he keeps up with them. So a dog and coyote run the same, see."

"They don't either. After recess we'll ask McAsker."

"All right then. McAsker will know."

McAsker, was I. It could have been worse.

Banney
1

neither?

My pupils, my minnow school of new Montana. It was like having a taste, a sample, of all of Scotch Heaven, daylong in the room with you. Susan Duff had bones longer than they knew what to do with themselves, in the manner of Ninian, so that her elbows stuck over the aisle the way his poked wide when he cut his meat. The Findlaters all were marvels at arithmetic. The Hahn boys had cherubic lispy voices like Willy's, you would never suspect that one or more likely both of them had just been in a fistfight during recess. Yet I always had to watch out not to peg a child according to his parents or older brothers and sisters. Along came small Karen, of the cog-at-a-time Petersons, and she had a mind like a magic needle. It penetrated every book I managed to find for her, and of my bunch in that schoolroom Karen was the one spellbound, as I had been at her age, by those word rainbows called poems.

When all was said and done, and of course more of the former than the latter, the learning drew down to the pupil and me. And I see now, more to the pupil than me. Did I install history in Susan Duff? No, just carpentered around its edges a bit. Was it my doing that Daniel Rozier could never learn to spell more than half of any word correctly? Dear St. Peter at the Gate, I hope not. I could bring the lessons to the eyeballs and the earholes. Where it went after that I could never know.

noisy

For all the daily tussle of schooling, there were distinct times when I wished the rest of the world was made of children as well. I had wondered what some of the community thought of having me as teacher, and I found out when the first dance of the year was held in the schoolhouse. Just after I had done a schottische with Rob's wife Judith, Allan Frew called out to me in a high girly voice: "Angus, aren't you afraid your petticoat will show when you kick up your heels like that?"

I stepped over within arm's reach of Allan, which made him blink and think.

"Ask me that outside," I urged him, "and I'll answer you by hand."

That ended that.

Then there was the matter that fists have never been able to settle. It had to be Ninian to bring me word of this, and I give him full due, he looked nowhere near happy to be performing it.

"Angus, this business about the universe being too big to understand and so on. I'm hearing from a few folks that they would like a bit more orthodox view of things told to their children."

Of anything to be scanned and poked and sniffed in the making of education, this. So far as I could see I was doing the job of teaching as well as I knew how. Probably better. To have it all snag on a sentence from Carlyle, himself a God-wrestler right in there with the most ardent--it put my blood up.

"Ninian, I can't get into that. You can say all day long you just want a bit of orthodoxy, but there's my-doxy, your-doxy, this-doxy, that-doxy. They're all somebody's orthodoxy. I don't notice Willy being here with you. Has he been saying I don't trot Martin Luther into the classroom often enough? Then there are the Roziers. I can invite the Pope to visit from Rome to please them, too, of course?"

"Angus, I am troubled myself with this. The matter was simpler when we were over across in Scotland."

"Oh, was it? Then you don't hold with the fellow who said the history of Scotland is one long riot of righteous against righteous."

"Now, don't start."

"You can fill your children with funnels of it at home, as far as I'm concerned. But I won't do it for you here at school. If you want a kirk school, then you'd better sack me and find yourself a preacher."

Ninian by now looked more bleak than I'd ever seen him, which is saying a lot.

"Ay, well. That's your last word, then?"

"It's even the one after that."

"Angus, we will leave this where it was. I have to go and tell them I told you." The long beard moved on Ninian's chest as he shook his head at me. "They don't need to know how hard of hearing you can be."

And then there was Rob.

"You know you're demented to be spending yourself there in the school," he informed me when I first went to Breed Butte to inform him. He said it smiling, but I could tell he more than half meant it. "Of course," he went on, "that almost goes without saying, about anyone as redheaded as you are. But--"

"--You'll be glad to say it for me even so," I finished for him. "And here I thought you'd be relieved to know there'll be a solid mind at the school for all the Barclays that seem to be on the way," Judith being notably along in another pregnancy.

"Solid is one word for it. Thick is another. Angus, man, you're missing a golden chance by not coming in with Lucas and me on more sheep. With prices down where they are, we can buy enough woolies to cover this country from here to there."

We. Lucas and thee and his money make three, I thought to myself. But said: "If you and Lucas want to be up to your necks in sheep, that's your matter. I have all I can handle and still take the school. And there's where I have a proposition for you, if your ears are ready."

My offer was to provide the hay, a next summer's task that I could manage to do after the end of school, for all of our shared sheep if Rob would lamb them this coming spring with his and Lucas's bands. He looked the proposal over from every angle--he was getting surprisingly like Ninian in that--and at last said he guessed he could go along with such an arrangement. "But you're missing

opportunity," he reiterated, "passing up Lucas's pocket this way when he has it open. Don't say I never told you."

"Rob, I never would."

So, without meaning to--there was no Greenock dock at the mouth of the North Fork valley, no green-funneled emigrant ship hawsered in the clear ripples of the South Fork--I had become a divided citizen again. Between the homesteader families and their children. Between sheep enterprise with the pair of Barclays and my own homestead. Between my homestead and school. Sew a flounce of several more hours onto each day and maybe then I'd have had almost enough time for all those. As it was, I knew I was skimping everything else for the sake of the school, for my effort to be all the teacher I could, but I saw no other way.

Say it better, wanted no other way. A year is not forever, I told my other consciences. Zephyrs from the latitudes of learning begin but in aspiration, I quoted righteously back at old Carlyle's universe, and came down the wind each morning to the South Fork.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,

Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;

My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream--

Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Some zephyrs took more of my coaxing breath than others. Songtime each week hinged on whatever Burns was in my mind just then and wherever Susan Duff's fine clear lilt led us. Neither premise was much my choice. But a thousand hymns had built Susan a voice, even I had to admit, and I'd found it was like pulling teeth to draw song suggestions from my other pupils, even though the schoolyard often rang with one chant or another. Children are their own nation and they hold their anthems to themselves. Ritually, though, I tried to pry music out of them:

"You're like a shool for the mute today. Now who'll tell, please, what we can sing next?"

"I know one, Mr. McCaskill," piped Davie Erskine, standing and swallowing a number of times. Here was surprise.

"Do you, Davie? Can we hear it now?"

Another salvo of swallows. Then out quavered:

"I came down from Cimarron, a looking for a job
riding for the outfit they call the Jinglebob.
The boss told me "Stranger, let's have ourselves some fun.
Come and throw your saddle on our horse called Zebra Dun.'

Oh, that old zebra dun,
that bucking son of a gun,
a-pitching his walleyed fit,
while upon him I did sit.

The punchers came and gathered, laughing up their sleeves
counting on their zebra bronc to do just what he pleased.
And when I hit the saddle, old Dunny quit this earth
went right up to try the sky, for all that he was worth.

Susan Duff was wrinkling her nose at Davy's minstrelsy. But as soon as I gave her a severe look, she joined in the chorus with Davie and me, and the rest of the children followed her. Onward Davie warbled with his verses:

Old Dunny pawed the moon and passed right by the sun
He chased some clouds a while then came down like a ton.
You could see the tops of mountains under our every jump
But I stayed tight upon his back just like the camel's
hump.

We bucked across the prairie, scattered gophers as we went
kicked the cook and stewpot right through the boss's tent.
But when the fray was over and Zebra done all he did
No doubt was left in this world: that outlaw I had rid.

The boss whooped hurrah! and threw the hat high off his
head

He shook my hand until it ached and here is what he said:
'If you can toss the lasso like you rode old Zebra Dun
You're the man I have looked for since the year of one.'

"Davie Erskine, that was--remarkable." It was more than that. There were days when Davie was so drifty he could scarcely remember how many fingers he had. "And where did you learn that tune?"

"From Mr. Fox and Mr. Mitchell." I had to expend a long moment to translate Mr. Fox and Mr. Mitchell: the riders Perry and Deaf Smith. "They took supper with us, when they were riding for strays. They said it's a song from Texas," Davie reported as if the place was blue heaven. "Texas is where I'm going when I grow up."

"That may be, Davie. But for now you're going to arithmetic. Davie and Susan and Daniel and Einar, your book is page 132. Karen, show the others where they're to read, please."

At the close of school that day, I stepped out as always to watch the children start for home, the walkers up the South Fork, the riders up the North Fork. The white horseload of little Findlaters, Susan Duff aboard her blood bay and Jimmy Spedderson on his black pony with the blaze face, Davie Erskine urging his roan with Rachel tight behind him. It was Davie I was seeing most of all. Seeing older Davies, although their names were Rob and Angus, hearing their own tunes of a far place.

A late afternoon near the end of the school year, Ninian Duff appeared in the schoolroom as I was readying to go home..

"Angus, I've been by to see Archie and Willy and we have made our decision on next year's school teacher."

"Have you now?" I'd been more and more aware that my time at the South Fork was drawing to a close, but it made me swallow to hear the fact. "I hope you've found a right one."

"Ay, we do too," he delivered right back. "It is you again. Temporary, of course, just for another year.."

I thought the beard was going to drop off Ninian when he heard my stipulation for staying on as teacher.

"Draw ahead on your wages! Angus, who in this world ever heard of a thing like that?"

"You have, just now."

"I'm standing here thoroughly wishing I had not." Ninian in fact was striding back and forth in front of my desk like a scarecrow in a cyclone. "I would need to talk anything of the sort over with Willy and Archie, of course. How much is it that you want to draw ahead?"

"I don't know yet."

Ninian halted. "Angus, what has got into--"

"I don't know yet how much the horse will cost."

"Horse? Where does a horse enter into this?"

"The new horse I intend to buy, Ninian, so that I'll at last be riding something better than my pupils do.

The rest of that, I will let tell itself. A Saturday. As usual, the wind put its breath in my ear as soon as I rode up onto

Breed Butte. But not as usual, instead of reining toward's Rob's place or Gros Ventre I pointed Patch across the divide of the butte and down, north, to Noon Creek. Her plodding pace reinforced my conviction that buying another horse from Dantley would be like throwing the money in the stove, so I was on my way to do something about that.

Isaac Reese's horse ranch was as far up Noon Creek as mine was along the North Fork, comfortably near the mountains without having them squat on you. And Isaac Reese had been issued the right face for a horse trader, for he showed no twitch of expression when I stepped off the Dantley nag as if I was a plump hen seeking a chopping block. When I told Isaac my purpose, he only asked in some accent my ears were not prepared for: "How much horse?"

I took that to mean how much was I willing to pay for a horse, and began the sad hymn of my finances. But Isaac Reese meant what he said. He studied me, eyeing my long legs, and judged: "You vant about him high," holding his hand at the height of my nose.

Had you tried right then to tell me how Isaac Reese was going to figure in my life, I would have laughed you over the hill. Plainly this was a man who knew horses. What else he knew--and I entirely admit it turned out to be a mighty total--was as unclear then as his version of English. Isaac was a Dane who had made his way across America with the railroad that was being built north of the Two Medicine River. My bet is that he learned his English, to call it that, from someone else who didn't speak it as an original

language. It was Isaac who would make famous a Noon Creek winter day when the temperature rose from twenty below to zero by observing, "Der t'ermometer fall up dis morning."

What Isaac Reese led out for me was a high horse, no question about that. At his shoulder he stood nose-high to me as prescribed by Isaac; a tall gelding of a striking strong brown color odd in a horse, remindful of dark gingerbread. Maybe I was no great equinist, but at the wheel shop in Nethermuir I had seen enough horses pass through to fill a corner of Asia, and I thought here was something handsome. I stepped closer to admire the steed and companionably rubbed his velvet neck while asking Isaac: "What's his name?"

"Skorp Yun," Isaac informed me. That had a pensive homely Scandinavian ring to it, and I was on the verge of asking what it translated to. When it came clear to me.

"His name is Scorpion?" I verified, stepping promptly back to where I had begun.

There ensued from Isaac a scrambled-egg explanation that the horse was titled not for his personality but for the brand on his right hip, a script M--*MC*. Isaac's explanation of the brand sounded to me as if the horse originated on a ranch which belonged to the Mikado. Later Lucas clarified that it was the brand of the Mankato Cattle Company in North Dakota, and "No, Angus, I wouldn't know either what a Mankato horse is doing six hundred miles from

long-tailed

home, nor would I ask into the matter as long as I had a firm bill of sale from Isaac."

While I was making up my mind about Scorpion, Isaac Reese was eyeing my colossal saddle on the Dantley nag. He inquired dubiously, "Do you came from Texas?"

"No, not quite that bad. How much do you want for this allegorical horse?"

MORE TO COME: quick summary of Angus's second year as teacher, largely ruminative, maybe using a few musing themes along these lines:

Games sometimes were season for weeks. The girls would be at (peevers) and the boys incessantly playing freight wagon with boxes along the cut bank of the creek, then abruptly tag and ante-I-over would be all the fashion. Never calm but forever interesting.

This time, it was an entire month before the end of school when Ninian made his appearance in my schoolroom.

"Ninian," I inquired when he had done rehiring me again, "did you ever see the word temporary in a dictionary?"

"Angus, we know this asks much of you, to take the school again. But just for next year."

"One more sun," sighed the king at evening,. "and now another darkness. This has to stop. The days fly past us as if they were racing pigeons. We may as well be pebbles, for all the notice life takes of us or we of it. No one holds in mind the blind harper when he is gone. No one commemorates the girl who grains the geese. None of the deeds of our people leave the least tiny mark upon time. Where's the sense in running a kingdom if it all just piffles off into air? Tell me that, whoever can."

"If you will recall, sire--"

This particular day of the last week of my second Fourth Fork year, I perched myself on the waterbucket stand at the rear of the classroom while Karen Peterson, small but great with the occasion of this, sat at my big desk reading to us from the book of stories. In the trance of Karen's reading, even Daniel Rozier only squirmed ritually, and I took quiet pleasure in seeing those still rows of oh so familiar heads in front of me. Adam Willox, did you ever have your moments of phrenology there in our Nethermuir school? Try to

test the capacities in those young heads against the way they looked from the back? I swear to heaven Susan Duff could have ruled France with the crown of her head. How such chestnut lustre and precise flow of tress had derived from old dustmop Ninian was far beyond me. But Davie Erskine's crownhair flopped in various directions and no definite one, and that seemed distinctly Erskinian. But then there was the bold round crown of Eddie Van Bebber, so that you'd have thought half the brains of the human race were packed under there, and Eddie Van Bebber was only barely bright enough to sneeze.

"Why is it that the moon keeps better track of itself than we manage to? And the seasons put us to shame, they always know which they are, who's been, whose turn now, who comes next, all that sort of thing. Why can't we have memories as nimble as those? Tell me that, whoever can."

"Sire, you will recall--"

Hope, spirit, deftness, kindness, tolerance, passion; I didn't know whether those were on the main neighborhoods on a phrenologist's skull map, but they were on my ideal one as I studied those South Fork and Scotch Heaven heads in front of me. Each, a head that I as teacher was to make into a literate and numerate mind. The impossibly mysterious process of patterning minds, though. How do we come to be the specimens we are? Tell me that, whoever can.

"Oblivion has been the rule too long. What this kingdom needs in the time to come is some, umm, some blivion. There, that's it, we need to become a ^{more} blivious people. Enough of this forgettery. But how to do it, it will take some doing. What's to be done? Tell me that, whoever can."

"If you will recall, sire, this morning you named a remembrancer."

"Eh? I did? I mean, I did. And what a good idea it was, too. For a change things are going to be fixed into mind around here. Send me this remembering fellow."

"Bring forth the king's remembrancer!"

In time to come, when Susan Duff had grown and herself become a teacher in Helena--I've always been sure that Helena is the better for it--I could wonder if I truly affected that in any meaningful way. In time to come, during what the fable king would call blivion, I always remembered Daniel Rozier more vividly than Karen Peterson, and in no way under heaven was that fair. In time to come, when Davie Erskine--

But that is ahead of what I need to tell now. For it was in the near time to come, the next school year, when the occurrence that was central to the rest of my life happened, not in my own classroom but another.

MORE TO COME: brief transition, maybe classroom or schoolyard dialogue--
ideas are welcome.

MORE TO COME: a section mostly in dialogue, showing Rob intent on getting ahead in the world and somewhat disapproving of Angus diddling around as teacher. That's to be followed by a short section of rumination by Angus, on why he still feels right to have become the teacher, and a bit about what the experience is like. Likely ~~he'd be~~ it'll lead into a paragraph about the schoolroom being a kind of ore sample of Scotch Heaven and the South Fork, some kids left-handed like a parent, some good at arithmetic as older brothers and sisters were, etc., leading into this:

But I had always to watch out not to peg a child according to parents or what his older brothers or sisters had been. Along came small Karen, of the cog-at-a-time Petersons, and she had a mind like a magic needle. It penetrated every book I managed to find for ~~give~~ her, including 00.

and of my bunch in that schoolroom ^{Karen} ~~she~~ was the one spellbound, as I had been at her age, by those word rainbows called poems.

Say it better, wanted no other way. A year is not forever, I told my other consciences, and went each day to the South Fork with an eager morning heart. The schoolroom routine was the sort I liked--never quite the same twice, but reliably similar. Like fresh lines of verse each day, in that way. And my pupils, my minnow school of new Montana. But there was a third something that drew me. Maybe call it the zephyrs. from the latitudes The wafts of learning, the breezes that blow comprehension into young minds. I was never not fascinated to notice arithmetic sprouting in

So, without meaning to--there was no Greenock dock at the mouth of the North Fork valley, no green-funneled ~~steamship~~ emigrant ship in the clear ripples of the South Fork--I ~~became~~ ^{had become} a ~~kindred~~ ^{divided} border citizen again. Between the homesteader families and their children. Between ~~the~~ ^{pair of} sheep enterprise with the ~~two~~ Barclays and my own homestead endeavor ~~efforts~~. ^{my} Between ~~the~~ homestead and my school. I knew I was skimping the others for the sake of the school, for my effort to be all the teacher I could, but I saw no other way. Sew a flounce of several more hours onto each day, and perhaps then I'd have had almost enough time for all. As it was, 

Only for a yr.

Wanted no other way, better say it better, . pupils

were a fascination

No man ... + pleasantly -
I worked so, constantly.

Day upon day in those first teaching weeks, months
that schoolroom, the obvious continued to dawn
on me.

Say it better, wanted no other way. The schoolroom was the sort of
routine that fit me--never quite the same twice, but reliably similar.
Like fresh lines of verse each day, in that way.

Say it better, wanted no other way. A year is not forever, I told
my other consciences, and came down the wind each morning to the South
Fork thinking how best to bring zephyrs from the latitudes of learning
into that schoolroom with me.

I did like the schoolroom routine--never quite the same twice,
but reliably similar. And the pupils. But there was a third
something that held me. Maybe call it the zephyrs. The wafts of
learning, the breezes that blow comprehension into young minds. A
person cannot be around a 00 as arithmetic sprouts in her mind and
doubt that there are zephyrs that bring it.

Ventre and could see past the trunks of the cottonwoods the sky-blue sign proclaiming Medicine Lodge.

"Adair, I'd better tell you," from him as if this was a hard day in the business of telling, "Lucas is not quite what a person expects an uncle to be."

Adair gave him a look of what next? "You mean because of his hands? But we at home have known about that for years."

"No," answered Rob, "I just mean Lucas."

"So now Montana can boast another Barclay!" boomed Lucas when Rob fetched him out of the Medicine Lodge. I swear, Lucas had figured out the situation to the last zero, just by the look on Rob's face, and for Dair's sake was being twice as hearty as usual. "Come down here for a proper hug, lass!" and she did, stepping gamely from the wagon into an embrace between Lucas's armstubs.

he bestowed on her with enough hospitality for several towns this size. "Adair, welcome to Gros Ventre." "By Jesus--excuse my Latin--you can't know how pure glad I am to lay eyes on my very own...niece!"

If Lucas hadn't been facing down the street toward Wingo's; if his last word hadn't shot out with an unexpected ring as the years of habitual talk about Wingo's "nieces" chimed in him; if Lucas hadn't started roaring, I never would have laughed. And Rob wouldn't have reddened into resemblance to a polished apple if it hadn't been for the uncontrollably chortling two of us.

Adair blinked in mystification.

"Nothing, nothing, lass," Lucas assured her. "Just a private joke. Maybe Robbie can explain it to you when he has time. , ay, Robbie?"

49A

There ensued a fast stew of family chitchat, ardent questions from Lucas and mettlesome tries at response from Adair and infrequent mutters from Rob, which I carefully stayed out of. If I knew anything by now I knew that the Barclays were going to be the Barclays, and the rest of the race may as well stand back.

Lucas ultimately reached, "Now you have to come around to the house and meet Nancy."

"Sometime, we can," Rob inserted rapidly. "But we need to head

home just now, Angus and I have chores and more chores waiting."

"No matter." Lucas waved an arm stub that Adair's eyes could not help following. "We'll be out to see you shear next week. It's past time all of us in the sheep business got a chance to watch something that'll make us money instead of taking it from us. We can have a Barclay gathering and welcome you proper then, Adair. In the meantime, make this awkward squad treat you right."

#

"And how is Adair ^{taking to} ~~enjoying~~ Scotch Heaven?" I sweetly asked that famous matchmaking brother of hers a few days later when he and I had to begin readying the sheep shed for shearing.

"Fine, fine," Rob attested stoutly. "She's having just a fine time."

"Getting used to the wind, is she?" I asked with solicitude. ~~She~~

the last of our wagon journey ^{home} from Gros Ventre ~~home~~ after Adair's

niecehood coronation by Lucas, ^g had been into a ~~steady~~ bluster which

^{steadily} tried to blow the ^{buttons} ~~clothes~~ off the three of us, and at the creek crossing ^{improve}

sent Adair's sunhat sailing. I had gallantly held the team's reins while

Rob waded to retrieve the hat from its port of willows fifty yards downstream.

"She never even notices the ^{old} breeze any more," Rob responded and impatiently

waited for me to lift my ~~xxx~~ ^{next} end of the shearing pen panels to be carried into place.

"I imagine seeing shearing will be a major thrill for her," I went on straight as a poker but enjoying myself immoderately, "don't you think?"

"I'm sure as anything it will," responded Rob as we grunted and carried. "And that reminds me of a thing," he galloped to the new topic, "the Leftover Day. I'm going to ^{keep back} ~~save~~ out a bunch of yearling wethers for it,

enough to make a real day of shearing. Why don't you team with me and we'll take on those Frews again?"

This startled me twice at once. First, that Rob was asking me to team-shear, so soon after making myself less than popular with him by unfurling my news of Anna to Adair before he could prepare. But one of the problems of a partnership is the difficulty of staying steadily angry at someone you have to work side by side with, and I supposed Rob's peeve at me simply had worn out in a hurry. The further unexpectedness, though, was that Rob intended a big event of what was ^{usually} merely the do-whatever-is-left-to-be-done final day of shearing. It of course had been Ninian Duff, back when we all entered the sheep business, to discern that if we ourselves did the last odds and ends of shearing--the lambless ewes who hadn't borne that spring, the ^{handful of} wethers destined to be mutton on our own tables, the crippled sheep and the lame sheep and the ill sheep and the black sheep, all the "leftovers" there ever are at the fringe of ~~any sheep raising~~ raising sheep--if we ourselves did Leftover Day we saved a full day of paying the hired shearing crew. Too, Leftover Day had come to be not just the finale of shearing but also as much

improve -
get rid
of "First"

quote
Ninian
on
raising?

of a bit of a festival as you can make ^{from} an occasion such as the undressing of sheep, with four of us taking up the wool shears ourselves, and the rest of Scotch Heaven to wrangle the sheep remnant and provide commentary. But this was new ~~and added~~, that some of Rob and Lucas's fine healthy yearling wethers would be in with the hospitalers and other raggletaggles of Leftover Day. It was a clear economy for the Barclays, to get those wethers shorn free by neighbors instead of the hired crew, but as to how Rob was going to justify this to those neighbors--

studied Rob.

"What it is," he enlightened me without delay, "I thought maybe Adair would enjoy seeing a real shearing contest. So I challenged George and Allan Frew to ~~a daylong~~ one on Leftover Day. ^{They went for ~~it~~ ^{that} like a pair of fetching ~~dogs.~~ ^{pups}"}

"fetching" used in Sea Runners?

I had to hoot. "You're a generous man, to show your sister how you get the whey beat out of yourself"--and myself too; I didn't miss that interesting implication--^{against the Frews} ~~in a~~ shearing contest. I can hear Allan crow now." I could, too.

Other shearing times Rob and I had teamed to try, Ninian and I had tried, Ninian and Rob had tried, every set of Scotch Heaven men with any contest spirit in them had tried and fully failed to tally more sheep than the Frew cousins ~~in the wether race.~~ ^{on Leftover Day.}

Wether?



The damn man Allan simply was a woolmaking machine and George was almost as bad.

"This is the year we'll put a plug in Allan Frew," maintained Rob.

"What do you say to that?"

"I'll say the plain fact, which is that we've never even managed to come close yet. Rob, the two of us have about as much chance of outshearing the Frew boys as we have of jumping over this sheep shed.

"Do we. And what's that?"

"These." # Rob

stepped over to where his coat was hanging, reached under, and

with a beam of triumph brought forth two gleaming sets of

wool shears.

I had seen my share of wool shears before. But not these. Each of

these ~~Each~~ ^S shear had a pair of ~~long~~ ^{elongated} triangular blades which with sharp expectancy, faced each other ~~expectantly~~, their bottoms linked in graceful loops

of handle. "Just listen to these lovelies sing," Rob urged me.

~~Experimenting~~ ^{Experimentally} dubiously

~~Experimentally~~ I put my hand around the grip of the shear ^S he'd handed

me and squeezed the ^{hfts of} metal. The faces of the blades moved across each

went over to where

To his coat was

had reached under

other like very large scissors that ~~was~~ had just been dipped in oil,

steel crooning gently as possible against steel. Zzzing zzzing, they

^{chimed} ~~made~~ a soft chorus with the ~~identical~~ identical blades Rob was clasp-

and releasing, ^{nying nyning.} Truly, ~~was~~ here was a shears that seemed to coax my

hand to keep working it, keep discovering the easy buttered whet of the

blades as they met. Here was just the thing to make wool fly, right

enough. I made my hand stop eliciting the whicker of the blades, so

that I could read their tiny incut letters:

Sheffield

"Finest steel in the ^{known} world," ^{proclaimed} said Rob. "Sheffield stuff holds an edge like a razor."

"These don't grow on Montana trees, Where'd you get them?"

"I had ^{Mc} Adair bring them. See now, Angus, these're our ticket over the Frew boys."

~~"Rob, it's a good idea and all. But I can't say I'm going to be that much faster, ^{a steerer} even with blades like these."~~

"Fast isn't it, man. Come on now, think sharp." He paused significantly. "The afternoon recess. Do you see the idea now or ^{am I going to} ~~do I have to paint it red for you?"~~

I saw, and then some: ~~some~~^{saw} through Rob here as an open window.

The winning shearing team were the heroes of Leftover Day, which was to say, ~~silent~~^{stolid} and effacing as George Frew was, Allan Frew was the perpetual hero of Leftover Day. But this time, this time Rob wanted me up there on the woolly cloud of triumph, for Adair to see up at it. The damn man was still trying to fan up ardor between her and me, exactly as if Anna did not exist. You had to credit him for persistence, moments when you didn't want to wring his stubborn Barclay neck. But rather than spend the rest of the day in steaming argument with Rob, I held myself to simply pointing out the hole in the bottom of his scheme:

"Rob, it's a clever idea and all. But I can't say I'm going to be that much faster a shearer even with blades like these. Allan came out of his cradle shearing faster than I can even ~~think~~^{dream} about."

"Fast isn't it, man. Come on now, think sharp." He paused significantly. "The afternoon recess. Do you see the idea now, or am I going to have to paint it red for you?"

I saw again, this time with my every pore down to the small of my back. I can swear that there was not a shearing muscle in me not alarmed by what Rob was proposing. Yet it might work. Outlandish enough, it just might. More than that, even. Gazing at Rob there in the shed, as innocently luminous with scheme as he had been when he lured me to the depot and Adair, I had the thought that Allan Frew was not the only one eligible for getting a plug put in him, come Leftover Day.

—

Life missed a major step in efficiency by putting fleece onto sheep instead of directly onto us. There is no other harvest like shearing, the crop directly from the living animal, panting and squirming, the shearers stooping daylong in sweat and concentration as they reap greasy wool. Everyone had work. Most often I was ^{scurrying to} gate man, ~~operating~~

^{all} the waist-high swinging doors in the cutting chute that sluiced the sheep into the shearers' catch pen six at a time--each penful the pantry the shearer went to for sheep, so to say. Behind me, Rob and Allan Frew customarily were the wranglers--wrangling consisting of steadily shoving the band of sheep to the end of the corral where they funneled single-file into my cutting chute--but as Rob and Allan performed wrangling, lengthy wrangles about theories of sheep and sheepdogs and shepherders also went on between them as if it was coffeetime conversation. If you ^{would} think of shearing as an hourglass of work, Rob and Allan and I and the unshorn sheep were the supply bell of sand at the top. The hired crew of shearers who traveled from job to job of this sort--my back ached to think of their season of stooped-over labor--made the neck of the hourglass: from the ^{shearing floor} ~~platform~~ where twelve or fifteen of them did their clipwork, naked sheep and fleeces of wool steadily trickled. Then on the other side of

the shearing crew, the catch-chamber of all this effort of shearing:
Archie Findlater the tallyman, Donald Erskine the brander who daubed
the sheep owner's paintmark onto each ewe's newly naked back, one boy
or another as doctor--Davie Erskine had just enough concentration to
manage it--who ~~placed~~ swabbed on disinfectant whenever a sheep was nicked
by the blades; and finally, ultimately, Ninian Duff as wooltromper stomping
the fluffy fleeces down into the long woolsack hung like a giant's
through a hoop in the high little tromping tower.
Christmas stocking. It always seemed to me fittingly festive that as
each woolsack filled with its thirty-five or forty fleeces, Ninian within
the sack gradually emerged out its top like a slow, slow jack-in-the-box.

All this to undress a sheep, you may say. But it wasn't the
naked affronted ewe, stark as glass knickers, that was the product of
this. No, it was the rich yellow-white coat she had been separated from.
Wool. ~~Montana~~ The pelt that grows itself again. I for one could readily
believe that when man started harvesting his clothes from tamed animals
instead of shopping wild for furs, then true civilization began. The
wool of our Montana sheep went off to Massachusetts mills with abracadabra
names such as Amoskeag and Housatonic and transformed into
became shirts, dresses, trousers,
overlook
blankets. You cannot ignore the marvelous in that.

Archie
was a
sheep
keeper

transformed
into

"Man, this is the year we've been looking for." Rob was built on springs, this shearing time. A tremendous wool crop at a good price, Adair on hand, the Sheffield shears waiting to trim Allan Frew down to size--every prospect pleased. ~~where~~

"The sky is raining gravy," I agreed with him and grinned.

(no q) I was in great spirits myself, Anna and our future always right there at the front of my mind.)

(no q) Adair I was aware of only at meals, when the entire shearing gang

of us trooped into my house to eat off the long plank-and-sawhorse table

Rob and I had put up. Odd to see, ~~in~~ there in my kitchen, her and Judith--

particularly Judith, whose presence there always reminded me that with

a small veer of fate ^{those} years ago she might be in my kitchen all the time--

but odd is part of life too. Yet I wondered what Adair made of all

this, our Montana and its ~~sheep~~ infinity of sheep and its mountains the

size of clouds and its clouds huger than mountains. I had my ^{one} ~~once~~ chance

to find out midway through that shearing time.

colored
print
2 ft and 6
in from -
horizontal position

(no q)

(no q)

We had just finished with the Erskine band and I was helping Davie
drive them ^{west} from the shed, toward the start of their summer in the mountains.

~~We were~~ ^{as we} ~~showing~~ ^{ed} them past my house and buildings, the sheep ^{comparisons of} blatting

indignation to each other and Davie and I and our dogs answering them

in full, ~~when~~ ^e out from the house can Adair to empty a dishpan. She

stopped to witness the commotion, ^{as who wouldn't.} Once the sheep were past the buildings

I called out, "They're yours, Davie," and dropped away to return to

the shearing shed. But my spirits were so high, with how well the ~~Anna~~

shearing was going and, ~~with~~ ^{with} yes, with thoughts of Anna someday standing

there in my yard where Adair now stood, that I veered over to Adair to

joke: "Whatever you do, don't count these sheep as they go past or you'll

be asleep ^{a year} ~~all summer~~."

"They look so--so forlorn without their wool."

"They'll have a fine fresh coat of it by the end of summer.

By the time you go back to Scotland, you won't recognize these ladies."

Or by the time, ^{Dair} ~~Adair~~ Barclay, I am the husband of Anna and you're

married to ^{some Montanian} ~~someone~~ conspicuously not me. One or other. But not that

result which Rob dreamed up, and still was trying to puff life into,

not that result for which he ~~had~~ ^{you innocent} brought from Nethermuir: not the

~~altar halter tying together~~
~~matching of~~ Angus and Adair, thank you just the same.

"Yes, I know ~~they~~ they'll get new wool," Adair answered.

Like poor old chickens ready for the pot."

"It's just that they're so ~~soon~~ plucked right now."

I noticed she was flinching from the wind trying to find its way into her eyes. "What you have to do, girl," I instructed as I moved around to stand between her and the breeze's direction, "is learn to get in the lee of it. I make an A Number One windbreak, if I say so myself.

"That helps," Adair said. "Thank you." She took the chance to look past me to the mountains, high and clear in the June air, and then around at my house and outbuildings and down the creek to the sheep shed. Then in that recital way of hers, as providing information to herself:

"You and Rob have built all this, here and at Breed Butte."

"And the others their own places, Ninian ~~fixed down~~ there and Donald and Archie." I thought to scrupulously add, "And the Frew boys,"

they're solid people too.

But yes, we had to build ourselves. This Montana is where work is."

"For you it must be like being born a second time, is it? Coming into the world again, but already grown."

"Something like that, I suppose. If you can call me grown." Standing a foot taller than she did, this was meant to cheer her with a chuckle.

Montana
solid
people
too

She only smiled the minimum and went on, as if still trying to get to the fact of the matter: "I don't see how you could do it all, you and Rob."

"Main strength and ignorance," I attributed. "Dair, speaking of work, that's what I've got to get back to. I hope you're taking to Scotch Heaven all right."

She gave me a glance in which she seemed to be seeing something of herself instead of me, not a Barclay look at all. "Adair is not to be fretted about," she ~~was~~ quietly advised.

Leftover Day. The morning of it was sheer hospital work, George and Allan and Rob and I laboring our way through ill and lame sheep, we trying to be as tender as they were fragile, poor old dears. Life perked up measurably just ~~before noon~~ before noon when we reached the first few of Rob and Lucas's big yearling wethers. It was always the case, that older ewes who had been through the shearing process before knew what lay in store for them and did not like it one least bit. Even that morning's wheezers and geezers ~~were~~ squirmed and writhed to the best of their ability. Yearlings on the other hand, virgin wool on

their broad young backs, were greatly easier to shear because of their ^{undefiled} ~~innocent~~ ignorance; even as you held them down and began working the shears over their body, they had a dazed disbelief that what was happening could be happening. And being wethers they had on them no hazards of udder and teats for us to be ^{extra} careful of--the easy of the easy, these yearling wethers who now were meeting our shearing blades.

"Those were just enough to get us going," Rob announced to the world and Frews at large, and with a wink to me, when we halted for noon dinner. I grinned, but only half meant it. Already shearing was taking a toll on my back and whatever parts of me it could reach. The afternoon ahead looked long. Allan Frew of course ~~looked like me~~ was as fresh as froth. "You're ready for the shearing lesson this afternoon then?" he piped out, with a particular ~~look~~ glint my way to remind me I was a schoolteacher. But it wasn't news to me that Allan had beef where his brains ought to be, and so I let pass everything of that noon hour except the constant thought that my shears were going to have to do a lot of talking the rest of the day.

"Ay, you're ready, both pairs?" declaimed Ninian from on high,  atop his woolsack platform. "As you know, Archie will tally and call out the totals of each team every ~~hour~~ hour. Set then, are you,

wait until we start counting

of shorn sheep than did my and Rob's version; leave the pairs of us there shearing for centuries and it would go on and on that way, always the left-side Frews manufacturing a few more naked sheep than we could. From experience and all else, Rob and I knew this would be the case. I am overtall to be any kind of an ideal shearer, having to get through the endless stoopwork in whatever spurts I could manage. Rob, as a person lower to the ground, could go about it much more ably, and with his ~~quick~~^{deft} hands he was a proficient workman with the shears, fine to watch. But George Frew was as relentlessly regular as do-re-mi-fa-so-la in disposing of a catch pen of six sheep, while the damnable Allan had several rhythms, all of them ~~casually~~^{casually} swift, for undoing the fleeces off his animals. Spirited infantry in the attack on wool, Rob and myself; the saber cavalry, those damn Frews.

As was confirmed by Archie Findlater's tally at the end of the first hour: "The Frew boys, ahead by two sheep," Actually, Rob and I could take heart from that, ~~other~~^{other} times, they outsheared ~~by~~^{us} twice that in the opening hour.

"We've got them just where we want them," Rob imparted to me in an under voice as he ~~went past with~~^{dragged his next} wool victim past me. Maybe so,

but my muscles had elsewhere they wanted to be.

Allan and George

The next hour ~~they~~ gained another two sheep on us, again ^a heartening ~~loss~~ result for Rob and me in that it could have been ^{so much} greatly worse. By now

the women were arriving from the house to watch the finale. Rob tossed

a wave to Judith and Adair between ~~finishing~~ finishing one wether and

diving into his catch pen for the next. I wasn't sure I could lift

an arm high enough for a wave, so I called out--parted out, really--

my greeting. Long since had these big broadbacked wethers ceased to be the easy of the easy of shearing.

Half an hour now until the momentous ~~recess~~ mid-afternoon recess.

My arm and wrist and hand were becoming a sullen rebel band from the

rest of my body. Long ago, insurrection had broken out at the small

of my back. I wondered how many other parts of myself there were to

be contended with in the half of an afternoon still ahead.

At last, it seemed days, Ninian climbed up out of his woolsack

and called, "Recess, both teams. Time to see to your blades."

From the corner of my eye I could see Allan and George stretch

and arch their backs, then walk over to the grindstone while Rob and I

labored to finish the sheep we were on. A streak of sparks flew as a

*To finish
a sheep
back at
the house*

more

bladeface met the whirling stone, kzzzkzzzkzzz. Rob released his shorn sheep, straightened for a glance at the Frews in their leisure of shear-sharpening and a quick cocked glint of reassurance at me, then dove to his catch pen and brought out a next sheep. I swallowed hard and followed suit.

Robert,
"Angus, ~~Rob~~, have you lost your ears?" came the next call from ~~and take some breath.~~
Ninian. "It's afternoon recess. Time to ~~sharpen your blades.~~"
take a rest halt and sharpen your blades."

"Work is all the whetstone we need, Ninian," Rob answered breathlessly as he clipped rapidly around his sheep. I saved air and without a word labored ahead on my own wether. The Sheffield shear in my hand still felt nearly as sharp and gliding in its clipping as when we'd started. *impress*

Here now was the card in the hat, the bone for the crow of those Frews. Our gamble was whether Rob and I, by forfeiting the stop to rest and sharpen, could gain enough sheep to offset George and Allan's skill and speed. The thought was that by keeping stoplessly at it we might just eke in ahead of them--one sheep, a half a sheep, any portion of a sheep would be pure victory--by the end of the day. The thought was that Barclay and McCaskill (McCaskill and Barclay, I had had to correct his formulation) were hardy enough specimens to withstand a recessless afternoon. The thought was...I tried not to think further about our forfeit of blessed rest.

From beside the skreeking grindstone Allan Frew hooted to us.

"You pair had better hope your fingernails are sharp, so you can use use them when those ^{shears} ~~clippers~~ get dull as cheese."

"Up a rope, Allan," Rob gritted out, sulphurous for him, the rest of that phrase involving an unlikely ~~show of firmness~~ hydraulic feat by Allan.

Meanwhile

We sheared like fiends, ~~McGaskill~~ and George and Allan unconcernedly went on with their blade-sharpening, interrupting to ^{refresh themselves} ~~take swigs of~~ with swigs of water, which, from Allan's lip-smacking testimonial, you would have thought was the king's brandy.

At recess end, Archie announced the new tally: "Rob and Angus are ahead by three sheep." I thought I saw Allan's eyebrows lift a fraction of an inch at that, but immediately he was mauling wool off a sheep and George was too, and Rob and I set ourselves to be chased.



But across the next hour the Frews not only did not catch us,
they gained only ~~two~~ a sheep and a half. ~~With~~ With one last hour of sheep
left, that was going to make the outcome ~~as narrow~~ as narrow as a ~~pin~~ needle.
Rob was shearing valiantly, even-even with George's implacable procession
of fleeces. I wasn't faring that well with Allan, or rather my hand
wasn't. Going into this day I thought my hands were hard as rasps,
toughened by every kind of homestead work since I took off my winter
mittens months before. But shearing is work of another magnitude and
I was developing a blister the size of a half-dollar where the haft
of the Sheffield shears had to be gripped between my thumb and first
finger. Between sheep I pulled out my handkerchief and did a quick
wrap around my palm to cushion the blistered area--Allan seemed to gain
half a dozen swooping strokes on me in just that time--and then flung
myself back to shearing.

In the effort of that final hour, I swear even my mustache ached
with weariness. My shearing arm grew so heavy that the labor of dragging
each fresh sheep from the catch pen was perversely welcome. Even through
the wrap of the handkerchief I could still feel the blister. And I
noticed Rob lurch a little, ~~like someone who has imbibed too much~~
--yes, you can imbibe too much work just as
you can too much liquid leisure--in his trips past me to ~~his~~ his catch pen.

Our salvation was that the Frew cousins were having the blades worked more mightily this day than they had ever~~m~~ out of them too, challenged ~~as they had never been before.~~ been before.

The afternoon and the supply of sheep drew down together. Our audience beyond the shearing floor had not uttered a word for many minutes. The snick of four sets of blades was the only sound now.

Finishing with ^{yet another} a mammoth sheep, I lurched to my catch pen. Only one sheep was there. ~~Rob's pen next to mine was~~ Rob's pen next to mine was empty. George's next to his was empty. Allan's had one sheep left. Dear God. This close. This far. I drew breath. Grabbed the lone last sheep and dragged. As I burst out through the woolsack curtain with my ~~sheep~~, I saw Allan hurl past me to catch his wether.

I had mine's hear shorn and was working desperately along his side when I heard the coarse slicing sound of Allan's blades go into action.

"Good, good, Angus," from Rob with hoarse glee. "You're almost there, man. Just keep on and you've got it made."

My ~~sheep~~ yearling seemed huge, long as a hog, enough wool on him to clothe an orphanage. Sweat streamed into my eyes. My hand seemed to work the clippers without me.

Q.38

I turned the ^{sheep} ~~eye~~ for the final side. Only moments later, I heard

Allan grunt as he turned his own sheep.

Now I had to do this just so.

Hand, keep your cunning. Do as bid. Slow yourself just enough, while seeming to speed for all you are worth. Work less than you know

you can, for the first time this day. The tail of my eye caught a

movement of Allan's head, he was throwing ~~me~~ a desperate glance to see

how much wool was left on my sheep--I met his eye with mine, I could

have resisted for a thousand dollars: I gave Allan
not resist: I gave him the briefest instant of a wink. And then nearly

regretted it, for it made him falter in surprise between his mighty

shearing strokes. But hand, you were in on the wink too, you were ever

so little less busy than you made yourself seem, and now, there, cut

air instead of wool, now the fleece again, what little is left, drive

the blades but not too--

100
100

Flax Scrape of steel on steel. No wool between. Then Allan's ^{shout} ~~cry~~,

"Done!" As his word finished in the air, ~~my~~ my own blades shaved free

the last of my wether's fleece.

I stood up, as far as my outraged ^{skeleton} ~~backbone~~ would let me, and met

^{supreme} the face of disappointment that was Rob. "Angus, Angus," he shook his

a mix of consternation and head in every nicker commiseration. "I'd have bet ~~good money~~ that lummox wasn't

going to catch ~~me~~ you on that last sheep."

a mix of
consternation &

"You'd be on your way to the poorhouse if you had, then," I managed to provide, trying to look properly downcast. Now that we were being joined by Lucas and Nancy and Judith and most of all Adair, I ^{spoke out with} ~~announced~~ what I wanted in all their minds and that last one in particular: "Did you ever see a man shear the way of that Allan? He can't be beat, I'm here to tell you." I waved widely to my conqueror. "Come over here, man.

Let me shake your hand." Which I did, blister and all, with the last

^{shred of} fortitude in me. Allan by then had convinced himself he hadn't seen a wink from me, I must have been merely blinking sweat from my eye, and by the time I found an excuse to get away from the throng, much was being made of him, not a little ~~of~~ of it by himself. And so it went later too, at the dance, where I assiduously romped the floor with Judith, with Flora Duff, with Jen Erskine, with any and everyone other than Adair. Not that I maybe had to be that circumspect, for ~~she~~ by then she was being squired to the hilt by Allan.

leave 5-line space in pace list

"You know that Nancy," said Toussaint in making the introduction
Blackfeet
of his wife Mary Rides Proud to ~~Rob~~. ^{us the next night} "This is another one."

I am sure as anything I saw a flick of curiosity as Mary looked
at Rob. About a heartbeat's worth. Then she moved to the stove and
the fixing of supper, ^{as if she were} like a drawing done of her ~~sister~~ ^{niece} at ~~this~~ ^{that} moment
in the kitchen of Lucas's house, ~~it~~ but with ~~her~~ blunter pencil.

printed to here

The household's indeterminate number of leather-~~bag~~ ^{dark} children eyed Rob and me with wariness, but Toussaint himself seemed entirely unsurprised at the sight of ~~us~~ ^{us}, as if people were a constant traffic through this remote small Reservation ranch. I see now that in Toussaint's way of thinking, they were; in his mind time was not a calendar bundle of days but a steady unbroken procession, so that a visitor counted equally whether he was in front of Toussaint's eyes at the very moment or long past.

Ocean's ebb and ocean's flow/round and round the seasons go. Never more true than in this walnut-colored man whose only sea was the river named Two Medicine outside his back door. Another ^{unexpectedness} ~~surprise~~ out of life's deep pocket of them, Toussaint always was to me.

"That Agency, Angus," Toussaint said to me now of the Blackfeet Reservation headquarters as if it was our customary topic, "Tomorrow you can see. If the Agency goes for a walk. It does, do you know. Every so often. The Agency was there by Choteau. Then it walked north to Birch Creek." I remembered now, Toussaint once having told me of watching the bull teams bring the Agency's disassembled log buildings through Gros Ventre to their next site when the ^{diminished} Reservation boundary was moved to Birch Creek. "Then it walked north to Badger Creek. Then it walked north to where it is. But that railroad, maybe it will scare the Agency into walking again. One day maybe it will walk to Canada and see the Queen." Toussaint ended this travel narrative report with a chuckle.

"Toussaint, this Reservation opened my eyes for me today,"

Rob put in.

~~"Toussaint, this Reservation is surprising," Rob observed.~~ "There's a world of grass up here."

"The buffalo thought so," agreed Toussaint. "When there were buffalo."

"Now there's a thing you can tell us, Toussaint," Rob ~~said~~ the grazier speaking now. "Where did those buffalo like to be? What part of this country up here ~~did~~ ^{was it that} they graze ^d on?"

There. About. Everywhere. Another Toussaint chuckle. "They were here. All in through here, this Two Medicine country."

change to
Rob's
saying for
a walk.

children

The knit of Rob's brow told me he was ~~trying to find~~ ^{having some trouble with} a definition of here that took in everywhere. I tried another angle for him.

209 "What, Toussaint, were they like the cattle herds are now?" I ~~was~~ ^{too}

trying to imagine ~~what~~ ^{the} a sight the buffalo in their black thousands made.

"Some here and there, wherever you looked?"

~~And in through here, this was Caloine country.~~

"The buffalo were more. As many as you can see at one time, Angus."

do
believe
here

Supper was presented ^{on the table} to ~~us the men,~~ ~~we three men,~~ but Toussaint's wife Mary

ate standing at the stove.

and some of the children took their meals to a corner and ~~other~~ ^{others wandered} went

outside with theirs and maybe still others went ^{up into} ~~onto~~ ^{treetops} the ~~roof~~ to dine,

for all that Rob ^{or} ~~and~~ I could keep track of the ^{batch} ~~batch~~. Domestic arrangements

interested me these days, but this one was baffling. So

far as I could see, Toussaint and Mary paid no heed to ~~one~~ another.

That must have had limits, though, because somehow all those ^{e/} children

happened. ~~At least there was a domestic arrangement here, which was~~ ^{of some interest}

~~more than I could say under my own roof.~~

After a few thoughtful forkfuls Rob let fall

The supper meat was tender but greasy. Rob asked Toussaint, "What

#

"Now you have me asking myself, Toussaint, just what delicacy

is this we're eating?"

"Bear."

swung half around in his chair

Rob cocked an eyebrow to me. Then ~~turned~~ and called to Toussaint's

in life,

yokemate, "The very best bear I've ever eaten, Mary."

~~in life~~

about our tomorrow's cargo

"This cream separator," wondered Toussaint, "is it a Monkey Ward one?"

Rob took a slow sip of coffee, in what I knew was his way of hiding a smile, then ~~answered~~ ^{exclaimed} exact: "The ^{See now,} very make, Toussaint. ^{See now,} Montgomery Ward and anything else in the world is almost at our doorstep, with this railroad ~~now~~ ^{now}. What a thing it's going to be for this country," he went on, sounding more and more like the echo of Lucas. "Homesteaders can come straight from anywhere to here, they can hop ~~up~~ from the train into a ~~wagon~~ ^{buckboard} wagon and go find a claim without barely having set foot on the ground. Not quite like when you and I ~~hustled our way~~ ^{hustled our way} hoofed in all the way from Augusta, Angus."

"Jim Hill's haywagons," Toussaint summed the Great Northern railroad and chuckled. and its builder, "One more way people will bring themselves," ~~he chuckled.~~

People and what they are. As Rob and Toussaint talked I was thinking of the expanse of country-to-be-peopled that Rob and I had come through that day, I was thinking of Anna out there somewhere under its waiting horizon, summerlong her erect presence beside the fresh steel road of rails, I was thinking of the intricate come and go that weaves us and those around us,

~~My mind was still on the expanse of open country we had come through that day.~~ "The winter of '86, Toussaint. What was that

of how Toussaint inexplicably was partnered in existence with Mary Rides Proud, Rob now with Judith, Lucas with Nancy--"The winter of '86, Toussaint," I suddenly found myself at. "What was that

like, up here?"

"That winter. That winter, we ate with the axe."

Rob made as if to clear an ear with his finger. "You did what?"

"We ate with the axe. No deer, no elk. No weather to hunt them in. I went out, find a cow if I can. Look for a hump under the snow.

Do you know, a lot of snowdrifts look like a cow carcass?"

Rob was incredulous. "Toussaint, ^{man,} you mean you'd go out and find a dead cow to eat?"

"Any I found was dead," Toussaint vouched. "Chop her up, bring home as much as the horse ^{can} ~~carries~~ ^{man,} West wind, all that winter. Everything drifted east. You had to guess. Whether the horse could break snow far enough to find a cow."

Toussaint seemed entertained by the memory. "That winter was long.

Those cattlemen found out."

I had a job all summer, driving wagon for the cowhide skinnners. That was what was left in this country by spring. More cowhides than cows."

"A once in a lifetime winter," Rob ^{summarized} ~~said~~, "and I'm glad enough I and sheds ~~are here~~ wasn't here to see it. Now we know to have hay, anyway. It's hard

luck that somebody else had to pay for that lesson, but life wasn't

^{built} made even, was it."

rose from her chair by the stove and went out,
 Mary Rides Proud ~~got up, rose and went out the door,~~ I supposed to
 the outhouse, if there was one. By now Nancy is part us and part them,
 Lucas's voice that ~~first~~ day we arrived to Gros Ventre and all this,
and you never quite know which side is to the front, when. ~~They~~ They
say when Toussaint rode into town with her, the two of them wrapped
in buffalo robes, they had so much snow on them they looked like white
bears.

it was on my mind

"That winter must've made it hard to get to Gros Ventre," I said
 to Toussaint. He gave away nothing in his look to me.

Rob glanced over at me, curious about my curiosity, nothing more.

"If you ever

had to," I added.

"When I had to, I did that ride," Toussaint said. "One time was
 all."

#

Setting out from Toussaint's to the railroad the next morning, Rob and I traveled the brink of the Two Medicine River's gorge for several miles to where the main trail crossed it by bridge. It was as if the earth was letting us see a secret street, the route of its water ~~was~~ below the horizon that customarily stopped a person's looking.

"Now why do you suppose they put a river all the way down there,

Angus? It'd save us a lot of hill grief if it was up here with the rest of the country." The Two Medicine would have ^{needed} to flow in the sky to match Rob's lofty mood ^{this} ~~that~~ morning, ~~as we set out from Toussaint's~~

"Talk to the riverwright about it," I advised him. Below us in its broad canyon the Two Medicine wound and coiled, the water base for all the world that could be seen. Anna, you need to see it with me, I vowed that June morning on the green high bluffs of the Two Medicine. Sometime we must come, just the two of us, and on a morning such as this watch summer and the earth dress each other in light and grass.

a 1/2 in

improves

questions"

"No help for it that I can see," Rob announced as he peered down the long slope to the river and up the longer one on its north side. "Here's where our horses earn their oats." Down we went and across, beside sharp stark bluffs.

bridge

"The buffalo cliffs," Toussaint ^{had} indicated ^{the heights along} ~~across~~ the river with a nod. "They were good ones. These Blackfeet put their medicine lodge near. Two times. The river got its name." (epitaph or poem: "I fell through life...")

more all buffalo section to hear

At the summit of the ridge above the Two Medicine, the land opened again into billowing prairie with mountains filling the western horizon. ~~The horizon was obscured~~ It took some looking as we rattled along in the wagon to spot our destination.

mountain chief Mtn?

(1909) This was before Browning was a town, and before it was even Browning.

Willow Creek, the site ^{had been} ~~was~~ dubbed for its stream, and ~~it consisted of~~ ^{what diff. makes it from}

what differentiated it from the absolute prairie was the ~~railroad~~ depot and the new buildings of the Blackfeet Indian Agency. Those and the railroad,

which had not walked

A single thin iron trellis across all this prairie, bringing the world to Montana, taking Montana to the world. From here at wan Willow Creek, Browning-to-be, now you could go straight by train to either ocean. Those years ago Rob and I had come into Helena by train and then onward to Craig, but this was our first view of naked track from horizon to horizon, trellis of the future.

Rob may have been thinking of the wool that would travel these tracks to the mills of Massachusetts in a few weeks, of the lambs that would go to Chicago at summer's end. For once he did not speak his thoughts, but ^{sat there next}

^{to me} ~~looked~~ ^{ing} ~~at~~ vastly satisfied.

I was the opposite of that, for nowhere along the miles of railroad in sight was there any dark turned earth of plowed fireguards, no crew of teamsters, no cook tent, no Anna. She was somewhere east beyond the ^{grass} horizon, at Kremlin, Harlem, Malta, places as distant as they sounded. But at least a summer wasn't forever.

^{Rob} ~~He~~ clucked to the team and we headed for the depot.



35A

Now that there ~~was~~ no prospect of seeing Anna, I was anxious ~~to~~ to head home and begin using up the days of this ~~wasting~~ summer of waiting. Rob was showing impatience too, at the lack of ^m whoever ought to be in charge of railroad freight. "What do they do, put ~~coast~~ of vanishing paint on depot agents?" he pronounced annoyedly. "Angus, ~~give~~ →

Handwritten notes:
Give
m
N