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INTRODUCTION

Robert Kirkpatrick, an early pioneer of the Bannack-Dillon area of Montana, wrote his reminiscences in 1889-90 when he was forty-two years old. These reminiscences cover the period of 1863 to 1889—the years which Kirkpatrick spent traveling to and living in Montana.

In 1957 the original manuscript of Robert Kirkpatrick was sent to Montana State University by Robert's son, James Douglas Kirkpatrick. It was turned over to Dr. John W. Smurr who suggested it to the editor as a thesis project.

The editor tampered very little with Kirkpatrick's style feeling that to alter his faulty grammar, spelling, and sentence structure would be to obliterate the genuineness and colorful simplicity that mark this work. But the editor did divide the manuscript into paragraphs and chronologically arranged chapters, and insert occasional punctuation to improve readability. Editorial comments or additions are placed in brackets.

Robert Kirkpatrick's unpretentious, but graphic style leaves the reader with the definite impression that the writer was a modest person who generally avoided exaggeration. His subtle humor and frequent usage of pioneer expressions add a pleasant flavor to the reminiscences.
FROM WISCONSIN TO MONTANA AND LIFE IN THE WEST, 1863-1889:
THE REMINISCENCES OF ROBERT KIRKPATRICK

edited by

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Chairman, Board of Examiners

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Date
Montanians went back to their homes and ranches again with a feeling of peace and security. These Indians had treated white women captured in Idaho with the most fiendish and barbarous cruelty. Lots of them died from the effects. They said in Montana they only wanted to pass through the country and did not want to fight the Montana people but would kill all the Lewiston soldiers they could find. Lewiston was in their country and after their fight with Montanians on the Big Hole they did not want any more of it. Two more such fights would have wiped them off the face of the earth.

Again in 79 the Diptheria raged in Montana carrying off a number of children. Since then there has been but little of it. There has been Scarlet fever some winters[,] confined mostly to small children and its ravages are not so bad as in older States east of the Missouri River. There used to be frequent cases of mountain fever, a kind of lung fever which proved fatal sometimes. Horses were subject to it as well as humans. Pneumonia carries off a few every winter. Small pox is seldom known in the country and its ravages are slight.

19 See footnote 7, Chapter V.
CHAPTER XV

We fitted up the house which was of logs, and prepared for spring and summer work in gathering in the brood mares from the range soon as the grass started so they could be kept in the pasture. There were about 80 mares and they ranged over several valleys including a territory of 40 miles in extent and it took over two months to gather them with almost incessant riding by one man. We ploughed as early as possible putting in Oats and Wheat as early as they could be got into the ground as the seasons are short for grain.

We had rain enough that season to help the irrigation a great deal, and plenty for the range. People keep right on irrigating through rains unless the rains are very heavy or very cold, as ordinary showers in Montana simply aid the work of irrigation in keeping the surface wet and preventing the soil from baking as it does sometimes in the hot sun while irrigating. Ordinary rains do not wet the ground deep enough to be of sufficient moisture. Most people in Montana flood the surface of the grain fields until a man with gum boots on sinks half way to the knee making the field a perfect mudhole. Then the water is dammed off into ditches as long as the quantity of water
in use will cover the ground sufficiently[,] and as fast as one set of lands are thoroughly irrigated, the water is
damed off into lower ditches below, always begining with
the upper land first so what waste water there may be runs
on to the next land below.

Water is measured under what is called pressure.
In Montana a box is set in the head of the ditch to be
measured, the box having sides and bottom stayed over the
ends on top with cleats. An aperture of six inches high
is made by nailing a cleat the breadth of the box at the
lower end an inch thick, and above it a three inch cleat
is nailed across the box exactly 6 inches above the lower
cleat. A slot is cut in the side of the box for a board
to act as gate, and along the top of the three inch cleat[,] which is an inch thick[,] is marked off in fractions the
breadth of the box. The water must pass under the three
inch cleat regulated by the sliding of the gate until it
is level with the top of the cleat. Then the water
passing under the cleat is reckoned in cubic inches.
The breadth of the stream passing under the three inch
pressure multiplied by the 6 inch height gives the cubic
inches of water used.¹ This is the regulation water law

¹See Appendix L for a comparison of Kirkpatrick’s
description of water measurement with the Montana statute.
of Montana and 3/4 of an inch to the acre is all a man is allowed by this measure, and then he is not allowed to waste the water, but must send all waste water back into the stream by a waste ditch below his farm.\(^2\) From 150 to 300 inches is what a good irrigator needs to flood the land quickly and in good shape. Irrigating by flooding with a small head of water irrigates parts of the land too much and other parts too little as the water needs to be flooded over the ground as quickly as possible without washing away the soil and be kept running on the same ground long enough to thoroughly soak it and then taken off. If the ground is soaked long in cold weather and it stays cold it sets the crop back. The streams of Montana are so cold that water taken from them in ditches is much the best if taken two miles or more to give the sun a chance to heat up the water. The streams coming from the snow and mountains and being bordered thickly with willow alder and cottonwood keeps the water shaded and the water seems cold as ice water in summer. A person cannot stand it to bathe but a few minutes at a time in streams near the mountains.

Cold seasons set the crop back late into the fall and endangered with frost. Grains and vegetables are

sold by the pound and only grain is reckoned by the
"bushel" at the threshing machine or in sowing the seed,
or in estimating the yield per acre. The grain is often
sacked in two bushel burlap sacks called centrals here.
The entire crop being sacked and stood on end on straw,
or when sowed as threshed is piled up on straw, and
often left out in the field surrounded by a fence to
protect it from the stock all winter and sometimes a
year. Where it is left a year it is generally piled on
a platform of poles to keep it from sprouting next to
the ground. Steam power is used in the threshing
generally with 12 or 15 horse power engines mostly
drawn by horses from one ranch to the next place.
Traction engines are just coming into use. The thresh-
ing is done for 2½ cents a bushel, and in most places
it takes 20 men and from one to two days to thresh the
grain which sells from 75 cents at the lowest to [$.]1.40
at the highest per 100# in sacks sewed and delivered in
town. The sacks cost 9 cents a piece[.] the thread 35
cents a pound[.] the best spring eyed needles [$.]1.25
a piece. These needles are indispensable where a man
sews the sacks as fast or nearly so as the threshing
machine turns out the grain. The thread is cut in to
lengths of one thread each for one sewing[.] doubled with
the loop end up and tied to the [sewer's] waist[.] The
spring eye of the needle is readily snaped into each
separate thread at its center[.] or loop[.] and eight or ten quick passes of a stich [stitch] each made in the bag after giving the bag a preliminary cuff or two to throw the edges together to be sewed, and two quick movements at the begining and end serve to make the ears and fasten. The men get [§]2.00 a day and board with the exception of the sack sewer who gets [§]3.00 a day. The feeders and engineer get [§]3.00 a day a piece but are paid by the owner of the machine. All the rest are paid by the ranchman who furnishes the board of all hands. The oats generally weigh to the two bushel sack from 90# to 100#, and the same sacks of wheat from 110# to 130#.

Butte city is the main market for southern Montana. Wild hay sells from [§]8.00 to [§]10.00 per ton loose, and what is termed upland hay or blue joint sells from [§]12.00 to [§]15.00 per ton loose. Timothy sells from [§]15.00 to [§]20.00 loose, baling adds [§]3.50 per ton. Prices of hay depend something on the severity of the winter and the range being poor or good. Potatoes sell for from 50 cents to [§]1.25 per 100#, depending on the amount of the crop. Improved farm machinery is in general use. The roads are nearly always good and hard and seldom in the winter a sled can be used excepting in the timber regions.
There are so many warm springs in some places flowing into the rivers that in such places the water does not freeze over in winter. There are some springs hot enough to cook an egg. Most of these springs are mineral and cure rheumatism by bathing in them, taking care of course to regulate the temperature so as not to cook a person.3

There has been many law suits over contested water rights along the streams and springs to settle what each party has a right to,4 and the party or parties instituting the suit generally summon into the case all parties above them on the stream and its tributaries to settle all claims to the water. If a party summoned fails to answer, his case goes by default and he is debared from any claim of water as against those in the contest, no matter what his priority of right might be if shown in its proper light in court. A decision is rendered by the Court according to the evidence in each particular case, and any party thereafter infringing on another's right to

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3 Hot springs are located at Jackson in the Big Hole Basin, Silver Star and Boulder, Montana.

4 Since the Montana courts have been the only arbiters or authorities in settling water disputes, there have been many water rights cases in her courts. Robert G. Dunbar, "The Search for a Stable Water Right in Montana," *Agricultural History, XXVIII* (October, 1954), pp. 138-149; John W. Makola, "The Development of a Policy Towards Irrigation in Montana to 1908," (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Department of History, Montana State University, 1950), pp. 34-44.
water can be arrested for contempt of court, and is liable for all the costs of court in his case, and a heavy fine and imprisonment besides if the Judge sees fit to impose it. A party needing water can go to the first party above him using water at the time whose right is of a later date and order him to turn down the water into the stream sufficient to supply the first party, "if he has a need for that much" even if it takes all the second party has in use. The second party will have to go to the first party above him with a [later] water right...who is using the water and order it down and so on to the end of the chapter. If any party so ordered fails to comply with the demand[,] he is liable for contempt of Court and the damages the first party sustains by the loss of water on his crop[,] loss of time, and all other losses sustained on account of the failure of the second party to comply with the demand for the water. These laws are stringent in order to properly protect ranchmen in their water rights and prevent as much as possible endless litigation.

All streams and springs that are tributary to the particular stream in contest are considered as the stream in question[,] and priority of right is acquired by priority of use of a certain amount of water or by purchase of a party who has a valid prior right[.] A party anywhere on a stream with a valid right to water can sell a part or all of his right to any body else, but he looses
his right to use any more water out of the stream unless the stream has more water in it than is used or he purchases of some other party.

The streams have but little water in them during the summer following a light snow fall in the mountains[,] and this makes it hard on the ranchmen as no crop grows without irrigation and the range without snow water can starve lots of stock to death, and makes poor beef. More preparation has to be made now for wintering stock in fields and having more hay to carry sheep and cattle through the worst months. The Ranges of Southern Montana are kept eaten off by large bands of sheep so that the range is very poor in comparison with the good feed of years gone by on the same range and now to get good feed the only snow is in the higher valleys where the snow falls so deep in them that the range in them is good only in spring[, ] summer and fall[,] and hay had to be fed in them in winter. The snow falls from 12 inches in some light winters to four feet deep in hard winters. Such winters makes plenty of water in the lower valleys the following spring and good range.

Stealing cattle is carried on on a big scale all over Southern Montana, and wherever there is a range for stock it is infested with thieves from the man who only dares to brand mavericks with his brand, to men who steal well known brands of horses and cattle. The first man
hunts up stock that do not appear to have brands on by as careful inspection as he is able to give them. It is generally done after the animals have shed their winter coat so as to take as little chance as possible of missing a dim brand and is generally done by riding through the stock scattered over the different ranges, selecting the mavericks as those without brands are called, driving them to his corral and if he has any doubt [there is] no brand on the animal[,] he lassoes it and throws it down[,] ties its legs and examines it for brands. If he still doubts[,] he sometimes pulls out or clips off the hair over any spot on the animal he thinks may conceal a brand by the hair being rough or long. If he is satisfied the animal is a maverick[,] he puts on his own brand and mark. The bolder thieves lasso stock of any kind they dare to and if they are branded, take a hot iron and blotch it up by runing the iron over the former brand. If the brand has parts resembling their own, they will disfigure the original with their own and claim it as their own property. This class in the spring[,] if they have cows or a dairy [dairy] of their own[,] steal calves off of cows on the range and put them with their own cows and claim them for twin calves, and in the fall and winter steal lots of un-branded calves off of their mothers and wean them by keeping them in their fields and then putting on their brands. They go out on the range and drive in fat cattle
and butcher them, often cutting out the brand or concealing the hide, and sell to the butchers or others by the quarter. Sometimes stock is driven off their range to long distances or in out of the way places and the calves weaned off of the cows when they are old enough[.]. and the steers butchered when they have been away long enough to be given up by the owner. Some of these thieves have large herds acquired in this way. Some of the thieves keep selling and squander the proceeds in riot. There are a host of ranchmen owning large herds that brand all the stock they find unbranded and a good many of them are unscrupulous in whose stock they get hold of in doing it. There are all classes and all grades of these thieves so that an honest stock owner has a poor chance to get along and succeed in the business as the thieves or rustlers[.] as they are called[.] are always stealing more or less of his stock and what makes it worse is that it is the young stock mostly that is taken. There have been a great many trials in the courts over such cases, almost invariably clearing the thieves, as the trials are by a Jury of twelve honest men as jurys are termed. These honest men are partly made up of rustlers, saloon keepers or others in direct sympathy with this class of offenders. The jurries in the challenging process loose most of their best element and a new venire is summoned out of the saloons often and men known to be in sympathy with the criminals. So the trial is simply a farce on the
face of it.

In a few instances a criminal has so few friends and so little money to use in the right channels to buy himself off that he has to go to the pen as it is called by some here. I do not know of but three men going to the penitentiary from Beaverhead Co. since 1863 for stealing stock, excepting a few wandering horse thieves stealing horses to ride out of the country. These latter [latter] are nearly always convicted when caught as they are poor and without friends. The county has a lot of these unpunished thieves that are far worse than those sent to the penitentiary.

In 1888 there were some heavy trials of several of these thieves with two convictions, for butchering well known brands in broad day light [after] driving the beef cattle through the main street of the town with plain brands and marks seen by several citizens and this done several times in succession. One of the parties was sentenced for five years and the other for seven years in the penitentiary, and others in with them and just as bad got clear, on account of having more influence and money. Some of the hides were sold to another butcher in the hide buying business. A whole load [was] hauled down to a river and dumped in, and the parties were seen doing it. Rascals get bolder as they are able to elude detection or punishment until they get foolish as these parties did. It created so much stir among ranch men and the cattle being
stolen from some of the largest herds in Beaver Head Co. and costing the thieves so much to get clear, that there has been a damper on such work since.

The eastern part of the State a few years back[,] as a territory then, and Wyoming Territory was infested with gangs of stock thieves and rustlers and the large herd owners combined[,] furnished their men with the best fire arms and instructed them to shoot and hang all these lawless characters they could find[,] and they made short work of them, shooting most of them and hanging a few. These cow boys are often a rough set and it just suited them fine to have the excitement incident on capturing and destroying the worst class of offenders and purging their country of the bold vilians. These cow boys were employed by well known and responsible and respected citizens and no complaints have ever been made as to the justice meted out to the rustlers, with the exception of a very few of men of that class themselves. It purged those places of thieves and made them safer for life and property of honest men than a whole decade of trials by court. It had the same effect as the work of the Vigilantes on the road Agents in early days[.] 5

I have not heard of a single party killed for spite

5See Appendix M.
or personal animosity, as these acts were controlled by bodies of responsible men, that only take hold of such work in self defense and where the common law is powerless to cope with rascals. The entire west would be overrun with desperadoes but for the wholesome taking off of the cut throats at times when they get beyond the reach of the common law and turn the whole country into anarchy.

Thanks to the constant influx of the best elements of other States[.] the state of society is very good now and rapidly improving, and what was a few years back a strong democratic territory is now a Republican State and is gaining republican citizens constantly and rapidly[.]

A great many democrats turned republican two years back on the Cleveland issue of free trade, notably so, a great many irish, noted as staunch Democrats before. The old saw thrown in the Democrats teeth here of all Democrats not being horse thieves, but all horse thieves being Democrats hit hard. The State Constitution shows what the people are made of now, and the laws are carried out by the Judges with honor as far as they have controll in their actions. The decission of the Judge is where it is left with him, far prefferable to jury trial in Montana and probably in most places in the far west.
CHAPTER XVI

The Ranches are of all sizes, from 160 acres, the farm of the poorest, to several thousand acres belonging to those who own cattle and horses and sheep by the hundreds and thousands. These large ranches are vitally necessary to large stock owners for the cultivation of hay, grain and vegetables for use of the stock, for pasture for summer for part of the stock and where there is good feed for the severe weather and snow for the poorest stock that have to be attended to near home. The way these large ranches are secured is, a man has a right to 160 acres under the Homestead act, 160 acres under the preemption act, 160 acres under the Timber Culture Act, 640 acres under the Desert Land Act, and his wife if he is married 640 acres under the Desert Land Act. Then he hires men to take care of his stock and to farm. He gets these men to take up land for him under one or more of their rights in their own name. When they prove up on the land, he pays all expenses and generally $200.00 for the loss to them of their right, besides paying them their regular wages. He is changing men more or less every year and so gets all the land required, and generally buys out a number of ranches taken up by [other] parties for their own benefit. ¹

¹See Appendix N. 235.
It was the custom a few years back to fence from mountain to mountain where the distance was only 10 or 15 miles across and have the line run across near their lower line and fence in enormous pastures above that line in places and keep most of the range above the lower line for their stock. The lower line kept their stock from straying below and saved a great deal of herding and expense, but complaint was brought against these acts of fencing in the public domain before the department at Washington and these parties with large tracts of Government land fences in were notified to remove their fences and open the land, which they were obliged to do to save prosecution. There are still small tracts of government land enclosed by parties with land owned by them and held by suferance. It [such tracts] is generally less than a quarter section, and in some places, od[d] tracts of mountain grazing land is in-closed with lands owned by [private] parties, and as long as it does not materially interfere with the needs of others, it is not complained of. 2

2Besides the objection of the U.S. Government to fencing the open range, the cattleman had a bitter experience in the terrible winter of 1886-87. That year was an extremely cold one with much snow. Many thousands of cattle perished for lack of feed and protection. Barb wire fence was instrumental in that disastrous winter. Prior to that winter, cattle were permitted to drift with the storms in order to seek ranges cleared of snow by the wind and to seek shelter. Many thousands of them drifted into and piled up against the barb wire fences and starved or froze to death. Joseph Kinsey Howard,
There are several kinds of fence in general use. The kind mostly used is what is termed Jack fence. It is made by boring 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) inch holes through a post 7 feet long and from 6 to 12 inches in diameter of red pine fur or cottonwood, "the latter is not much used as it is scarcer and rots quick". The number of poles is generally 5, often 4, and sometimes only two and 3 to the pannel. Then the opposite way of the post is bored with two holes and mortised out for the jack leg as it is called, the leg being about 5 inches in diameter and 5\(\frac{1}{2}\) to 6 feet long. The mortise for the leg is put in at the proper degree of incline to give the fence the amount of slant required for this kind of fence. The fence leans towards the field it encloses and sets on top of the ground. The [jack] leg being inside of the field. Some of these fences are mortised out between holes and the poles flattened. Others are made with round points. There are a great many combinations of this style of fence. A great many have two poles and 1 barbed wire, some three poles and two barbed wires. This last style is used a great deal with heavy poles and Jacks and makes a fine fence where one of the wires is put on the jack leg 6 inches below where it comes out of the [main] post, as it braces the fence better and prevents stock from rubbing

Montana, High, Wide, and Handsome (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1948), Chapter XI.
the fence down. The rails are all round poles from 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) inches in diameter to 7 inches at the butt ends of some, 4 inches is about the average, and 16 to 18 feet in length. The poles are lodge pole pine and red fur, mostly pine, and the fencing has to be hauled from 3 miles\([\,]\) to about the closest of the higher ranches\([\,]\) to 30 miles to some of the lowest \([\text{ranches}]\). Nearly all the ranches are fenced in these days or the range stock would eat them all off.

There are some ranches fenced with two or three strands of barbed wire put onto posts set in the ground\([\,]\) and the law requires one pole above the top strand to be seen by stock, as a number get torn by the wire. The barbed wire of the best kind costs 6 to 7 cents per pound. Good poles cost from 12 to 15 cents a piece laid down on the ground, post 30 cents, legs 10 cents, and the fence put up in good shape on the land \([\text{costs}]\) from \([\$$]1.00\) to \([\$$]2.00\) per rod, where it is let out by contract.

Ranches in Montana as in California and other western places are of but little value without a water right. They are worth much more than they used to be before railroads were built in to the country\([\,]\). The best parts of the valleys being taken up and fenced reduces the range and opportunities of stock getting at the water along the streams a great deal. The hill and mountain and foothill range belongs to everybody and there are springs all through the hills and mountains where stock can get water winter and
and summer[. . ] A man's range for his herd is only limited by the endurance of his saddle horses and number of them. Hospitality is general among ranchmen, and it costs him nothing when hunting over the different valleys for his stock for horse feed or his own keep, and he returns the compliment. Often a ranch will look like a hotel of a evening by the number of ranchmen to be entertained and it is rare when any charge is made. Ranchmen are acquainted with one another for 75 miles and exhibit neighborly feeling. This is a style peculiar to all the far west as hotels are scarce and far between, and seldom on the range where the stock is hunted. Often neighbors join together in scouring the range for the stock belonging to the outfit.

In summer it is the custom for several to take a mess wagon and one of their number drive it and cook from one place to another. A few extra saddle horses are led along with the wagon and picket-ropes[. . ] bedding and grub is taken along with the mess wagon, and the stock are branded at different corrals along the route. In winter they stay at ranches where night overtakes them and are made welcome.

The large herds are being sold off one after another as the valleys get fences up and the watering places, and stock owned in smaller lots and kept near home or in fields.

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3 Such affairs are commonly called "roundups."
and more attention is paid to the finer breeds. Horses are still owned in large numbers by different ranchmen. They will range where the snow gets too deep for cattle and sheep, as they are enabled to paw the snow away from the grass.

Winter often does not set in until about Christmas and often opens so the dry ground thaws out in Feb. and March, and grass starts in the latter part of March and the beginning of April. If the snow falls to amount to anything, it is soon swept off the hills and valleys into the gullies and hollows by the wind.

The last 10 years most of the cattle and sheep have to be fed more or less in the fields where the grass has been allowed to grow during the summer so that a little hay carries the stock through the winter as most of their feed is picked up in the fields. Some of the ranchmen who have plenty of hay feed their beef steers all winter in their fields. Great numbers of horses, sheep and cattle are shipped out to eastern markets by rail in summer and fall.

There are what are called Chinook winds sweeping over Montana from the Pacific in some spells in winter which sweeps the snow away rapidly. These winds are warm and come sudenly and unexpectedly, and are of great benefit in modifying the winter weather, and a boon to the stock and stock interests of Montana. The worst cold spell and blizzards come about Christmas and New Years. Some winters
the Thermometer registers as low as 20 and 25 degrees below zero for three or four days in succession. Just before New Years or past after some winters it goes down to 40 and 50 degrees below zero and same length of time [sic.]. The air when the spell is the coldest is generally still and the difference between 25 below and 50 is hardly perceptible.

Up in some of the mining towns it has been known to go down to 68 or 70 below zero. These are the times that people talk of prosecuting any one for writing any more poems on beautiful snow. Once in 1865 and 6 the Thermometer registered 55 below zero on the valey. There is some cold windy weather in Feb, but the thermometer does not get down very low.

The railroad trains usually get blockaded soon after severe storms on the mountain divides sometimes so as to delay the mail five or six days at a time. Sometimes it takes a large force of men to work through to the trains. On the Utah and Northern branch of the Union Pacific Railroad the passengers get snow bound and have to return to Dillon until the trains can force their way through. Such blockades seldom occur on the Utah and Northern in a winter considering the altitude of the range. Now the service of this line is excellent and time good and the fares of all the lines in Montana are being reduced from year to year, and the excursion rates to long distances
going into operation the 15th of every month are low when
distance and expense of service are taken into consider-
ation.

The extension of railroads, building branches and
new roads taking new routes to the Pacific in and through
Montana is increasing rapidly so that Montana will be a
network of railroads soon. There are five different lines
of railroad in Montana, and several more enroute for
Montana besides several new branches building and more
projected and surveyed.

The country is rapidly settling up especially the
towns, and by a good class of citizens, come to stay. The
main Cities have the advantages of the highest degree of
civilization of the east, street cars, steammotor and
horse, electric lights and gass, and the hotels have
fine accomodations and food of the best[.] well served
and the other advantages of civilization attendant on
energy and wealth.

The epidemic deseases are so few and the country
is so seldom disturbed by them that they are scarcely
worth mentioning. There have been very few visitations
of small pox that did not spread. [There has been] one
general spread of diptheria and a touch of it since[.]
Scarlet fever [has come] two or three times with but few
deaths by it[.]. There has been a few cases since the
territory was formed of measles with very few deaths[.]
Once in a great while [there is] a case of typhoid fever. There is more lung fever in severe weather in winter. It is called mountain fever here generally and attacks horses as well as human beings, and pneumonia carries off a strong man once in a while. It appears to attack the robust the most, and is the most dangerous disease for adults in these mountains. There are but few cases of it and they are generally brought on by carelessness or exposure in bad weather. The measles are seldom fatal here unless the party takes a bad set by exposure and taking cold and such cases are generally among men. Diphtheria and scarlet fever are the most dangerous epidemics on children. 1878 was a bad year for children as the diphtheria swept over Montana carrying off a great many children but no adults. 1889 was a bad year for children, carrying off a good many with scarlet fever but only a small proportion of those who had it. Hydrophobia and sunstroke are unknown in Montana, as also is Cholera or any of its kindred diseases. People have colds here often in the winter and different forms of sore throat. Diseases that go with fast life in mining towns are the most prevalent form of diseases in Montana, but are almost always confined to the towns.

Sound is heard long distances. Often the pant of the blower on the locomotive can be heard 8 miles across hills[,] and the roar of a moving train over steel rails can be heard 12 or fifteen miles on certain days and the
Locomotive whistle can be heard 15 miles.

Single pine trees can be seen on the clearest days on the mountains 15 miles or more away and that from the inside of a house through a window glass with the unaided eye, where the mountains are white with snow which acts as a fine background for the deep blue of pine in the distance, and mountains can be seen at enormous distances in our clearest air. The air is so light in the highest valleys and ranges that consumptive people and those with very weak lungs sometimes bleed at the lungs[.] and it is difficult to climb steep mountains the air is so rarified. A person expands the nostrils and chest to the utmost and the mouth open, and there is sometimes an alarming sensation of suffocation for want of air that one does not experience where the air is denser. One needs to take plenty of time in ascending steep declivities and they will be troubled less with the light air.

Vegetables, beans[.] potatoes and etc. take a very long time to thoroughly cook in the higher altitudes, sometimes taking nearly half a day to cook beans soft, water evaporating rapidly high up.

The snow often falls heavily in the mountains with little or none in the lower valleys, and often the snow falls in certain localities to considerable depth and none at all in other adjoining[.] The way the valley lays to the sun makes a great difference with the length of time
the snow lays on the ground, and the warmth of the valley for raising crops in. Sometimes corn[,] fruit[,] cucumbers[,] tomatoes and such tender plants can be raised close to the mountains on the west declivity while three or four miles below on a river bottom with a rapid descent from the mountain potatoes are hard to raise on account of frost and damper ground. Up under the mountain it seems colder, but the sun does not affect the air until much later in the day, so the frost does not have so much effect. Apples and some other fruits are succeeding in some of the more northern valleys. The Valley of the Bitter Root is one and a few specimens of apples have been raised in Beaverhead Co.

-END-
The Raw Edge, J. B. Armstrong (1969)

46-7 - Household ways.

Church + School

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nearest tepee and hid in the roll bed, but Will was right behind and pulled us out by the legs and took us under each arm, screaming and kicking back to the cowboys. If it hadn't been for some of the cowboys making a plea for us I'm sure they would've hung us. It was very impressive to us small 'cowboys.' After the laugh was all over the cook gave us a can of tomatoes and some sourdough biscuits—which was what we were looking for anyway.

That was the first time I saw Will Rogers, when he was a cowboy for the Houdstien outfit. I saw him another time in Amarillo, in 1902 when he and Tom Mix were riding in a wild west show—the day of the wild west shows that were held in a big circus tent and had Indians and a stage coach hold-up; and Will Rogers and Tom Mix bucked out the wild horses.

Household Ways—Trading with the Indians

It is wonderful to think back how Mother could take care of her family. She had no such thing as a washing machine. The only convenience I can remember that she had was a sewing machine, a rarity for a pioneer mother, which was constantly in use as she had to make all the clothing for the children—six of us at home, the three oldest boys having been working on the range for some time.

Our food was the garden stuff in season, sweet potatoes, corn, green beans, pumpkins, cabbage and melons. We had milk only when the cows came fresh in the spring, but we always had cornbread, sorghum molasses, pork and beef.

When traveling on the trail we kept our meat fresh by hanging it out at night and rolling it in a canvas tarp in the daytime, packing it underneath the canvas wagon sheets. By hanging it out at night the cool air refreshed it for another day. A lot of times we kept meat for a week or ten days in our camps, by building what we called a Mexican ice box—we'd dig a hole, pour water in and let it soak down, then when we'd put the meat and butter in, we'd cover it with blankets. When we'd take it out the next night it would be nice and cool. That was part of pioneer living.

One of the first things I remember on the trail was dragging a gunnysack, picking up buffalo chips (dried buffalo manure), commonly known as 'prairie coal.' The 'prairie coal' played a big part in settling the plains because that was the only kind of fuel the pioneers had.

Mother would take our eggs and butter and sorghum molasses and go to the Indian camps to trade for clothing for us children. I remember we used to get rolls of denim, or jeans cloth, and Mother would make jeans for everyone in the family. Then we'd trade for pots and pans and dishes and blankets, and often white flour the Indians didn't know what to do with. In fact, if it hadn't been for the Indians it would have been pretty hard for the settlers to get along at that time, because money just wasn't to be had.

The material the Indians had was furnished by the Government. They didn't make it up because they didn't like it to start with. What they needed was something to eat! We used to trade them pork and beef.

One time an Indian, an old fellow, came to our house to trade clothing, pots and pans for a beef. He had dinner with us and sat at the head of the table while we children watched him eat. We had boiled beef, cornbread, white beans and sorghum. He liked the beef and sorghum best. He didn't have much use for the knife and fork and ate mostly with his hands.

The next day he came back and brought a great many of his people along. The Indians did the butchering. From the time they started to take the hide off the beef the little children were there for their part. They caught the blood in tin cups and drank it. When they got to the inside of the beef they took out what they called the marogut. They cut that off in little pieces and the children ate it the same as white children eat candy. The grown-ups pulled the fat off the carcass and ate that. They left nothing but the hay from the paunch. It all went—hooves included because the Indians used those for tools and ornaments.

We used to gather dry-land terrapins (turtles) and trade them to the Indians for a hat or other clothing. And the Indians were pretty good traders—they'd give us what we needed for food, and they'd measure out on the quarter of beef or many ribs.

We didn't play much with the Indian children much during these trades. At that time the Indians weren't so playful; they weren't civilized! However, I remember some of the chiefs, Chief Black Hawk, Chief Standing Water, and Chief White Shield, who were not unfriendly. When we'd go to their camp, we'd see the Indian kids and their little tepees the same as we had our little dugouts. But we were careful about playing around their camps because they weren't altogether neighborly, even though they traded with us.

The little Indian fellows would cook their meat in their play tepees just as we would roast our meat in our dugouts with the little fireplaces. The Indian kids were quite like the whites, only a little different—and they were very human as I remember.

Their supplies were wretchedly poor. It was a fact that at times they pulled dead cattle out of the river bogs, skinned them and took the meat, hide and all. I know people might not believe this but it is true. I saw it happen. It's been a
Sagelwood Dentist - Frackleton, Will

1947

p. 45 - Hotel + house trading

47+ - 1-man police force; horse stealing

51 - "swamping" the floors.

54 - Preserves in beer bottles

86 - Cooking sage chickens

103 - Home remedies

119 - Traveling dentistry

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173 - Bellwhackers
DR. KELLY TAKES ME IN

which was a big circular saw. Whenever the Deacon needed an extra point or two in a close match, he just shot to hit the saw, which vibrated like the gong behind the bull's-eye.

Along with the citizenry of a rapidly growing Sheridan were the ranch bosses and cowboys of the neighboring country. These men came in at all hours of the day or early morning, depending on when they happened to hit town.

I remember a tapping at the door of my room at four o'clock one spring morning. The manner suggested the caller was in no great need or else had mistaken the room number, so I buried my head in the pillow, hoping he would leave.

My patience wore out before his, however, and I dressed and opened the door. There, leaning comfortably against the casing, was a cowpuncher from down Powder River way. He took the brown paper cigarette from his mouth and looked up with a grin:

"Hello, Doc. What time do you open up your office?"

I told him and he went away perfectly satisfied. He had simply wanted the information; and when a cowpuncher is up for the day to smoke his first cigarette, he feels the whole world should be up with him.

When patients were few or the weather too fine to be resisted, I shut up shop and explored the neighboring country by stage or with a rig rented from the Sheridan livery stable. The more a young professional man circulated in the towns, I thought, the better chance of building up a practice.

The largest of these neighboring communities was Buffalo, located about forty miles south, and very jealous of Sheridan's rise as a railroad and commercial center. County seat of Johnson County and situated on the old Bozeman Trail, this typical cowtown of the early West lived on the Fort McKinney garrison and the dwindling wagon-train traffic.

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The trading stores displayed their goods in barrels, on pine board counters, or from clotheslines stretched above the counters. Saloons were numerous but there was only one hotel. That was the famous old Occidental.

The clerk was also the bartender. A gambling house in which roulette, faro, poker and stud poker ran wide open shared the room with the hotel office. In lieu of plaster paper, the guest rooms in the rambling old log structure were hung with muslin, back of which mice played all night long. In an early attempt at luxury, the muslin walls of the dining room had been painted bright blue, but nature and leaks in the roof had added long, dirty streaks of rainwater.

Sheridan was not overly addicted to law and order, but it was Buffalo that introduced me to gun-play of the time-honored Western variety. During a spring business trip, I stood in the doorway of the Occidental contemplating the town.

A few benches had been distributed along the front of the hotel and one of them was occupied by a pair of whistling horse traders. Horse trading was a real ceremony, and the more traders "studied," as they called it, the slower the whistling became. When a deal was reached, it was the custom of the traders to throw away what was left of the pine sticks and seal the contract by expectorating a large quantity of tobacco juice at a convenient target.

The current deal, however, met a sudden interruption, for out of the barroom stepped Red Angus, proprietor of the hotel, and sheriff of Johnson County during the late cattle war. Red had blood in his eye, and across the street stood the reason—a man by the name of Arapaho Brown.

Angus was above medium height, with florid complexion and a red moustache: Arapaho, also a veteran of the cattle war, was heavier set and shifty of eye. Both men had passed
CHAPTER FIVE

Court Week in Sheridan

In all fairness, however, the country was far from regenerate, and I met a wholly different clientele in Sheridan during spring court sessions. Then it was that official law and order blossomed and the lawyers and their clients and witnesses gathered from the remoter parts of northern Wyoming. The jurors rode in from the ranches for a holiday with pay, and a man who was not mixed up in at least one case, if only for friendship's sake, had no civic standing whatever.

That first court week saw a steady procession of patients raising the dust from the carpet in Dr. Kelly's office and I realized, for the first time, why the location of a county seat was a matter of life and death for so many towns in the West.

I wasn't the only one to profit from the influx. The saloons and gambling houses did a capacity business and the churches held fund-raising dinners and sociables. Several unattached crusaders and the beginning of a Woman's Christian Temperance Union also became greatly concerned at the doings of the unrighteous and the vice that was in our midst.

The police force consisted of one Scum Peeler, who attended to his duties with a fine discrimination. If a bunch of cowpokes got liquored up, rode their ponies into a saloon,
COURT WEEK IN SHERIDAN

and did a little shooting. Scrub regarded the commotion as normal, court-week festivity. He locked up the common drunks until sober and never interfered with family disputes. On occasion, however, he could handle a gun with the best of them.

A step above Scrub, with his routine labors in the interest of law and order, stood the Sheridan County sheriff, his deputies and the prosecuting attorney. Minor cases were settled by a justice of the peace, but appeals from his rulings and the more serious offenses were held over for the county courts and helped to make court week the big event on the town calendar.

I don’t know how the custom originated, but the lawyers used to gather in the barber shops and rehearse their arguments before a trial began. A favorite place for this diversion was the old O. K. Barber Shop, which virtually became a mock court. Safety razors hadn’t been invented and shaving was a leisurely process. The lather dried on many a customer’s face while either Burnside or Sherrard, razor in hand, stepped over to give a ruling to a loquacious attorney in another chair. The opinions of both barbers seemed to carry more weight with the public than did the real court, and the wags of the town always addressed them as Judge Burnside and Judge Sherrard.

The old files in the high-ceilinged Sheridan courthouse testify as to matters before the county judge, and Messrs. Sherrard and Burnside. Chiefly, they record a succession of trials for assault with intent “to kill and murder ... with a rifle, which rifle was then and there loaded with gunpowder and leaden ball” or “with a knife, the same being a deadly and dangerous weapon.”

Nearly as prolific a source of legal fees was horse stealing, and many a defendant faced a jury on a charge that he “did wilfully, unlawfully and feloniously steal, take, lead and

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drive away one dark brown (or otherwise colored) mare, unbranded, of the value of $5 or upwards.”

Such thefts, serious in themselves at a time when these animals offered about the only form of cross-country transportation, became doubly so when the brand was changed. Then the depositions set forth “the defendant did wilfully, unlawfully and feloniously alter and deface the brand ... by then and there branding said animal over said brand with the intent to prevent identification and to steal the same.”

Occasionally a culprit pleaded guilty in the face of overwhelming evidence and threw himself on the mercy of the court. More frequently he marshalled an army of character witnesses and took a chance with a jury. Conviction usually brought a prison sentence.

The big cases involved cattle rustling or killing, and it was in these that the county prosecuting attorney really extended himself. Usually the livestock association threw its moral support behind the law and helped to assemble the evidence. Witnesses on both sides were numerous, and on one or two memorable occasions, a prisoner turned state’s evidence and spoiled the show.

Next to unprovoked murder, a conviction for cattle rustling always drew the heaviest jail sentence. This was not surprising when one considers that northern Wyoming wasn’t really thrown open for settlement until 1879, and that the old Fremont, Elkhorn and Missouri didn’t reach Casper until 1888. The Burlington & Missouri was now bringing in homesteaders to speed the end of the open range, but the cowmen were still the undisputed political bosses of the state.

These rough-and-ready dictators had been the first to put to use the land over which the trapper, the hunter and the prospector had needlessly traveled, and they made the laws

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COURT WEEK IN SHERIDAN

and picked the men to administer them. Their herds, numbering tens of thousands, were mostly longhorns and Mexican dogies, run up over the old Chisholm Trail to replace the vanished buffalo; and they were determined to protect their rights against rustlers, sheepmen, homesteaders and other intruders.

Wyoming justice, however, had a way of tempering itself in the days before parole boards were invented, and though a stock association might secure a conviction, it was another matter to make the sentence stick. The prisoner would begin serving his sentence, but as soon as a reasonably decent interval had elapsed, his pals would circulate a petition for release.

These appeals to the governor invariably set forth the virtues and untarnished early record of the victim of the law's rigorousness, gave the names of his starving family, if any, and expressed the belief that he would die of consumption or some other convenient disease if kept in prison much longer.

Occasionally these pleas for clemency went to ridiculous extremes and thus defeated their purpose. I recall one case in which a hard-hearted jury very justifiably sentenced a murderess to death and split the town busybodies into two warring camps. One asserted, via petition, that the sentence, if carried out, would be a foul and lasting blot on the escutcheon of the gallant state of Wyoming. The other demanded with equal vehemence that the law be allowed to take its course in a state where the fair sex had the vote. "There was no arguing with either group, so I signed both petitions. So did all other citizens of Sheridan who valued their peace of mind. I believe the sentence was commuted, but the petitioners had little to do with the result."

The passing of court week left a temporary void in the

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life of Sheridan, and it sometimes took a really good funeral to get life moving normally again. Human weaknesses were forgotten and virtues extolled in the presence of death, and the orations over the dear departed were as flowery as any lawyer's plea in behalf of a guilty client. I recall one service that combined an admission of the general worthlessness of the cause of the ceremonies and a testimonial to the virtues of his surviving spouse.

Old Chuck Looper was a member of a profession peculiar to pioneer Sheridan. Sunk in the Main Street drainage ditch in front of nearly every store was half a whiskey barrel filled with water. At regular intervals, a man would dip an old tobacco pail into the barrel, fall to with a broom and "swamp" the floor of the establishment employing him.

The best that could be said about Chuck was that he held his likker like a gentleman, wielded his broom with the vigor of a sailor holystoning the deck, and had a wife who stood ace high in the respect of the countryside.

Mrs. Looper was a brisk, motherly little body with plenty of courage and a warm heart. She played nurse to the sick, brought the babies into the world at a time when regular doctors were scarce, and could be counted on for many a job that required womanly tact and kindness. We always suspected she married Chuck because he needed looking after.

When old Chuck finally passed in his checks, there was a quiet conference before the bar at the Sheridan Inn and another, later, with Deacon, the undertaker. It was generally agreed the swumper hadn't been much 'count but, on the other hand, Mrs. Looper was, and she would feel very badly if her lesser half passed unnoticed to his last resting place.

We all chipped in and six of the most prominent men in Sheridan volunteered as pall-bearers. Services were held in
A DENTIST HAS CIVIC DUTIES

jected emphatically. “You’d better get somebody else.”
Hanna chuckled.

“Fat cattle? Say, Doc, there’s nothin’ hereabouts on the
range but a lot o’ ornery longhorns run up from Texas. As
for sheep, this is cow country. Nobody’s goin’ to show any
woolies; they’d just be inviting a visit from the stock asso-
ciation afterwards.”
Hanna also reminded me that there was nothing there
to brag about in the poultry line, for the immediate an-
cestors of the hens and roosters had squawked their way
across the country in homesteaders’ prairie schooners. Just
to draw him out I mentioned the preserves that played so
prominent a part in the exhibits from the lush farming
country around Milwaukee.

“Hell, Doc, there ain’t no such thing. All you’re goin’
to see is some wild plums, choke cherries, service berries
and maybe some chaparral berries put up in beer bottles.”

“In what?”
Hanna explained further. The pint, quart and two-quart
jars that exhibit home preserves so temptingly at modern
county fairs hadn’t been introduced by the local stores at
that time. The pioneer housewife, however, always in-
genious, corralled a goodly supply of beer bottles just before
preserving time. A cord was tied around each bottle, just
below the neck, and soaked in kerosene. This improvised
wick was lighted and, at the proper moment, blaze and
bottle were plunged into a tub of cold water. Off dropped
the top, leaving a jelly glass that was perfectly acceptable
for home use.

“Besides,” concluded my visitor, “the women folks’ll be
the judges for that.”

“Then,” I rejoined, “where do I come in?”
Hanna explained that the races and contests were always
the highlights of the annual fair. The English colony that

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had settled around Sheridan raised crack hunters and
jumpers for shipment back to the old country, and the cow
outfits were equally proud of their ponies and teams. Ob-
viously a judge who could do justice had to be allied with
neither faction. Nobody, he insisted, could be more neutral
than a young professional man named Dr. William Frackel-
ton.

“There’ll be a few meetin’s of the show committee, but
they won’t take up much o’ your time. All you got to do
is to be on hand when the races start . . . Will you?”
Innocent that I was, I agreed.

The county fair was held at the old grounds and race
track opposite the sugar factory. It was all very exciting
but, to my way of thinking, the throngs that turned out
were the most interesting of all the exhibits.

They were a colorful crowd — old and young, second
sons of aristocratic English families, weathered cowhands,
old army scouts turned helpers on the ranches, and Chey-
enne and Crows from nearby reservations. Many had taken
as long as three days to make the trip.

The Indians kept to themselves and parked their tepees
and wagons along Big and Little Goose Creeks. While
they entered a few of the contests, their main purpose was
to barter moccasins, buckskins and beadwork for beef and
other items.

The whites camped on the fairgrounds or stayed with
friends in town. They renewed old acquaintances, hunted
up relatives, inspected new babies, talked about the pro-
spective ones and argued over politics and the best patent
medicines for rheumatism, the shakes and other pains and
ills.

Quarrels were rare, for fair week was simply one grand
get-together. Occasionally, some old-timer overestimated
his capacity in the way of liquid refreshments and was
CHAPTER TEN

The Snaky Road to Casper

WHEN I had finally talked Tom O'Day into going back alone to the Hog Ranch, I left word for my partner at the Lost Cabin Saloon that I was going up the creek a mile or so in search of a likely camping place.

The truth was, I was in the mood for solitude. I wanted to think a bit, roll my own cigarettes, smoke my pipe if I felt like it, talk over my plans with the horses and cook what I wanted the way I wanted it. The last was significant, for my partner and I had commenced to argue over the amount of salt in the food — the first sign of an impending break in camp life.

If you've never talked to horses you have no idea how companionable they can be. When you ask questions and then answer them out loud for yourself, they don't tell you you've gone plumb crazy. They cock their ears and look down and sympathize with everything you're saying. Besides, these ponies had done us a good turn and deserved a good feed and some rest.

With an eye to supper, I shot three sage chickens on the way up the creek, and finally reached a clump of cottonwoods that seemed a natural camping place. I first staked out the horses, then dug a pit for the Dutch oven and built a good fire of greasewood and cottonwood.

Into the oven went the three sage chickens with some dough and a can of tomatoes to complete the mixture. Next the cover went on the oven, and a mound of hot coals and ashes was heaped on top of that. And, if you have never eaten out of a Dutch oven, with some of the old reliable black Arbuckle's coffee to fill out the menu, you don't know what good eating is!

While the meal was cooking I leaned back against a cottonwood trunk and smoked a few cigarettes. I must have dozed off, for the next thing I heard was one of the horses nickering. A horse will always warn in this manner of the approach of a stranger, of stray stock, or of anything else not belonging to his outfit.

Off in the distance, towards Lost Cabin, plodded a team with a mountain spring-wagon. A man was driving, and as he approached I could see a box of sinister shape on the wagon — the kind that coffins are shipped in.

"Heard you were up the creek a bit," said the driver. "Mind my camping alongside? Seems to be nice and quiet here."

"Glad to have you . . . But what's that?"

"The kid brother."

The kid, I was told sadly, had been badly clawed by a silver-tip bear near Meeteeetse and hadn't survived his wounds. This man had been notified and had driven a hundred miles from his ranch near Lander to claim the remains.

While he was making this first trip, however, complications had arisen in Meeteeetse. There had been a gunfight in which a man was killed. There was nobody on hand at the time to protect the kid brother's remains, and the friends of the gunplay victim were insistent that he be shipped to the nearest railroad center, which was Red Lodge, Montana.

There wasn't another coffin in town, or a sawmill, lumber or carpenter shop, so the kid brother was dug up and his
POKER NELL’S DIAMOND TEETH

seen rarely nowadays. I explained that in order to do the work as she wished it, it would be necessary to replace the natural teeth with Richmond crowns — a porcelain-faced crown with a gold backing.

She shrugged her expressive shoulders.

“You know what I want, Doc. Go to it.”

Out came the gold foil fillings, leaving the nerves exposed. Most dentists of that day used a preparation called Nerve Devitalizing Fiber, but this caused excruciating pain and I had developed a better method. This consisted of saturating a bit of cotton the size of a pinhead with almost pure carbolic acid and pressing it into the cavity.

The carbolic deadened the nerve instantly, and it was the work of another minute to go into the canal with a barbed nerve broach, also dipped in carbolic acid, and take out the nerve.

Nell went through the ordeal without a murmur.

“Now,” I said, “we’ll give these roots a treatment of beechwood creosote before we remove the natural crowns. That’ll leave your uppers intact as to looks for business purposes.”

She smiled gamely.

At the next sitting I filled in the roots with gutta percha filling and explained to Nell that I would cut away the diamonds in their flat settings from the rest of the rings in the shape best suited to our purpose.

The crowns, when made, matched the natural teeth in size and color, and I placed them in position for a checkup. Everything was well as to appearance and workmanship and ready for the delicate part of the job — the drilling of the hole through the porcelain facing and twenty-four carat backing to hold the setting.

By embedding each crown in a liberal wad of sealing wax and using the platinum pin as a steadier or holder, I

SAGEBRUSH DENTIST

got away from any wobble and set to work with my old foot engine and a cone-shaped corundum stone well greased with vaseline.

It took many minutes of painstaking work before I finished. There was not a break in either crown. Then, with the diamond settings in position, I checked Nell’s mouth again for alignment and looks.

After that came another ticklish job of investing the crowns with the settings in plaster of Paris and shredded asbestos, of heating the case cherry red with an alcohol flame and mouth blowpipe, and of doing a little careful work with a low temperature solder as the final step.

When the work had cooled, I removed the covering with some misgivings. All was done except the final polish. The crowns with their diamonds went into Nell’s mouth. The ladies of Casper got their eyeful and the town doctor was horrified.

This doctor was young and used to drop in at the hotel for a friendly chat, but he never could get used to our advertising methods, and his visits usually ended in a sermon on professional standards. He said we were most unethical and I guess we were, but I never argued the matter.

Most of these young doctors originated at Harvard and came West, well primed with ethics and enthusiasm, to a population accustomed to getting along without doctors. The old ladies had their pet herb medicines and attended to bringing the babies into the world. They didn’t relish any youngster fussing around in their domain, despite an impressive diploma.

The men were addicted to self-administered remedies. The universal panacea for internal disorders was whiskey and Jamaica ginger, which required neither a doctor’s fee nor a drug store prescription. Fevers called for sage tea,
COWBOYS, INDIAN SCARES, NEW CIRCUIT

so we hurried to the street to see what it was all about.

Out on Thompson's ranch, in the Tongue River country, a Cheyenne Indian had killed a shepherder. Was it personal or were there tribal implications?

None of the fugitives seemed certain, but the best information pointed to the settling of a personal feud. Apparently, however, the Indians on the Cheyenne reservation were on the warpath, and the sooner Sheridan got ready to protect itself the better.

To the old-timers it was a repetition of the panic of 1887, when the Crows were reported (without foundation) to be on the warpath, burning ranches and scalping settlers. The fairgrounds were turned into a refugee camp and Frank Grouard slipped off quietly to talk with some of his Indian friends. He returned with the news that all was peaceful on the reservations and the settlers began to go back home.

Somebody suggested that what Sheridan needed to end this Indian "menace" was a first-class army post, with a regular regimental payroll. That was an idea! The more the business men thought about that payroll, the more serious became the Indian problem. The Post, the Enterprise and the Daily Journal forgot their differences in a united appeal for protection from the Indians.

Meanwhile, trusting Grouard that there was no danger, I set out on the first trip around my new circuit. To the south was Buffalo, where I made the bridal chamber of the Occidental Hotel my professional headquarters. East of Sheridan I went to the trading center of Clearmont and the railroad town of Gillette.

To the northwest, on the old Bozeman Trail, was brawling, boisterous Dayton, terminus of the McShane Flume and source of most of the railroad ties used in the construction of the Burlington & Missouri. Traces of that flume, which sent ties cut of mountain timber thirty or forty miles

to Dayton during the spring thaw, can still be seen in the Tongue River Canyon.

The men who maintained the permanent camp at Dayton were no angels, but the town livened up even more when the tie-hackers came down from the mountains after sundown. A few were thrifty, but the majority stayed to gamble or came to Sheridan for a more varied run for their money. In nearly every case, the town gamblers saw to it that the cards spelled another season of work in the mountains.

Ranchester, where the ties were taken from the Tongue River and loaded on flat cars for use in Montana, was another hot spot. From Ranchester I usually drove north to Parkman and from Parkman to Lodgegrass on the Crow reservation. Parkman was a huddle of saloons and stores with a hotel that was little more than a shack; Lodgegrass became a focal point for my friends among the Crows.

As my journeys from Sheridan became known, ranches along the route invited me to stop and give the hands a week's going-over. These were most numerous after the spring and fall round-ups.

My equipment on those trips would appall the modern dentist. The engine was of the old foot type and the polishing lathe a cumbersome affair. As for a dental chair, any kitchen or hotel chair would do. Sometimes only a rocker was available and this had to be blocked fore and aft.

The sad for gold had its problems, and many a five- or ten-dollar gold piece was hammered into shape on a ranch anvil because a cowpuncher insisted on a gold crown or gold bridge work. Coins minted from California gold were the best for this purpose, for the metal held its color well. Black Hills gold always showed the copper and stained badly in a tobacco chewer's mouth. X-rays, oral specialists, and clinicians were unknown, and the pioneer dentist had
to trust to God in an emergency, go to work and do his best.

One young woman came to my office with nine of her front teeth knocked out. With her came the missing teeth wrapped in a pocket handkerchief. I sterilized her mouth as thoroughly as possible and cleaned the teeth, wired them to a spectacles bow — the only thing available — and put them back into position. Twenty years later the patient called to see me. Her teeth, although slightly discolored, were still doing service, with no sign of infection anywhere.

In another accident, an old rancher's jaw and the false teeth I had made for him were badly fractured. It was a case for the surgeons, but the problem was holding the jaw until the bone knitted. Fortunately, he had an old set of teeth at home and I suggested knocking out a couple of front ones, putting the plates into place and binding them together. This was done and Mr. Rancher took liquid nourishment through the hole in the teeth until he recovered.

The hackers from the tie camp were among the most interesting of my patients. They were in the pink of condition when they came down from the mountains after a season of hard work, plain food, decent hours and no whiskey, and could take the punishment of a dentist's chair like stoics.

On some of the ranch jobs I encountered unexpected opposition and comical situations. I was down on the old Pitchfork Brand Ranch using the bunkhouse as my dental office, when the "chore boy" came in, suffering from a badly infected wisdom tooth. The chore boy on any ranch, incidentally, was called the "hen wrangler."

We decided on an extraction. Out came the tooth which was tossed out the door and off went Mr. Hen Wrangler with one hand at his jaw. In a few minutes, Mrs. Hen Wrangler appeared. She was a person of consequence,

being the ranch cook, and one look at her told who wore the breeches in the family. Was it true that her husband had lost his wisdom tooth?

"That's what it's called," I replied.

"That man ain't never had any too much sense anyhow," she stormed. "You put that wisdom tooth back where it came from and do it in a hurry."

At this moment, a wandering hen discovered the pearly trophy in the yard and made off with it. I went after the hen, the lady after me, and between us the tooth was recaptured. Just to keep the peace, I restored it to the owner's jaw.

Twelve years later, when Sheridan was big enough to support several resident dentists and my circuit was only a memory, Mr. Hen Wrangler came into my office. A bit heavier and more weathered, he explained confidentially that his wife had died.

Remembering the lady, I was tempted to congratulate him but offered the customary condolences instead. He shifted from one foot to the other and finally allowed he'd like that old wisdom tooth removed.

"Been troubling you?" I asked.

"Hell, no. It's been working on the old woman's cooking all this time. But I can have my own way now and I want it out!"

Indian patients were not uncommon. One day a Cheyenne squaw came into my office with a badly infected tooth. Again an extraction was in order and, after being given the same careful treatment accorded her white sisters, she paid her bill and went her way.

In a little while she was back. Just as with women and hospital experiences today, she wanted to brag about that extraction. Would I please give her the tooth?

Alas! The tooth had been thrown out. But she wanted
CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Justice Comes to Basin City

BIG HORN COUNTY was organized in 1897. Judge Stotts invited me to cross the mountains and help initiate the new county seat, Basin City, into the legal formalities of Wyoming Justice. He pointed out that it was an excellent opportunity for a young dentist to become known in a new section of the state and, more important still, he wanted company. As for justice, there were seven murder cases on the docket to make the first term of court a memorable one.

It was hardly the place for a woman, so I talked Bess into staying in Sheridan. Judge Stotts had freighted into the basin country in his youth and knew it thoroughly, but there were many distractions to slow the trip.

We pulled into Basin City two days late, to find ourselves greeted as civic benefactors. There were not more than half a dozen completed buildings in the town. The hotel was still under construction and, while the rooms had been lathed, the plaster had not been applied and there was little privacy. Most of the visitors were sleeping in their bed rolls or in tents.

The hotel was run by Mr. and Mrs. Patrick Dowdell, or rather, Mrs. Dowdell ran Pat, the hotel and the saloon which was a part of the building. Pat was also the bailiff and in charge of the prisoners awaiting trial.

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The rush of business at the hotel was such that Pat, as bailiff, turned some of the prisoners loose to wait on the guests. Thus it came about that a man who was accused of murdering his wife with an axe, was doing most of the cooking, while one of the waiters was awaiting trial on a charge of poisoning his sweetheart. Dowdell exacted a promise not to escape, but this was almost unnecessary for the two were among the seven most important personages in Basin City. Would they run out and spoil a great occasion? Most assuredly not!

Sheridan had horse races during court week, and Basin City's fairgrounds and race track were still to be laid out, but the new county seat was not to be outdone. Every afternoon, after court had adjourned, lovers of horseflesh had their races down the main street. Betting at the races was high. Nobody liked to hurry a good thing, and two of the seven cases were still to be disposed of when the meat supply gave out. The over-anxious butcher slaughtered a critter without proper sanitary precautions so that he could hear the opening arguments in the trial of the hotel cook, with the result that everyone who ate the meat came down with dysentery.

Judge Stotts was a kindly and convivial man and suspended court for three days while the afflicted ones recovered. The malady called for excessive doses of Jamaica ginger and whiskey, and things really boomed for those three days.

I was also stricken and mentioned my predicament to Mrs. Dowdell. The old girl had been drinking heavily but told me to come with her into the unfinished kitchen while she opened two cans of tomatoes with an axe.

Into a dirty Tom and Jerry bowl went the contents of the cans and over them a lot of soda crackers, crushed by Mrs. Dowdell's equally unwashed fingers. She stirred the
JUSTICE COMES TO BASIN CITY

mess vigorously with one hand and beamed unsteadily:
"There yez are, me bye. Ate till ye bust!"
"But —" I began.
"G'wan and ate it. It'll do yez good."
There was nothing to do but follow orders. I ate, while she swayed and watched.

Late that night she quarreled furiously with Dowdell and went off in a drunken rage to plot revenge. She made her plans but felt she ought to warn the guests. She came to me and said confidentially:
"Move your stuff out, me bye. Th' house will burn down this very night."
"How do you know?" I demanded.
"Watch me, me bye, an' you'll find out!"

We were all too hilarious to take her seriously, but we were willing to watch. She reeled into the unplastered lobby, found a half dozen candles, tied them together clumsily, laid them on the table top and lit them.

Out came her false teeth, to be laid beside the burning candles. Then Mrs. Dowdell sat down heavily in a wooden rocker, leered like a Hallowe'en pumpkin and waited vindictively for the conflagration.

As the candles burned, the wax melted and spread around the teeth, which began to resemble 'a badly fried egg. The table top charred but refused to burn; the flames went out, and that was all.

Today I have completely forgotten the outcome of those seven murder cases. This quirk of memory isn't surprising. Gunplay was common and arose out of a variety of causes, mostly personal. People took these affairs as a matter of course and, as in the case of Lew Hartsough and "Mac" McGlaughlin, refused to become morally indignant over the outcome.

Lew started one of the early livery stables in Sheridan,

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went bankrupt, and was making an honest effort to pay off his debts. The judge appointed McGlaughlin as receiver and Mac put the stable in the hands of a man Hartsough disliked.

McGlaughlin was a big man, with a reputation as a fighter, and was always looking for trouble. He swaggered into the stable one morning and began to argue. Hartsough flared up and pulled a saddle gun out of a holster lying on the floor.

McGlaughlin taunted him, saying, "You haven't brains enough to grease a gimlet."

The gun went off and funeral services were in order for McGlaughlin. Hartsough was convicted, served four years out of a sentence of twenty, and was pardoned. Both men were popular and some of the citizens thought the four years in prison too long a sentence, everything considered.

I once saw a "thumb" catch a tough Mexican cheating in a monte game. The Mexican resented the accusation, reached for his gun, and was caught by a bullet before he could straighten up. Three more hit him as he went down and he was buried in the local cemetery with his boots on. If any regret was expressed at the time, it was simply that there were not two burials. The thumbers were the predecessors of the modern machine-gun gangsters; they did most of their shooting at close quarters, and relied on speed for safety. They removed trigger and guard from their revolvers, and by raising and releasing the hammer with the thumb, an expert could shoot almost as rapidly as with a modern automatic.

The position of the .45's in the belt usually revealed the owner as a thumb, a one-gun man, or a two-gun man. The thumber wore his gun with the handle pointing back, the barrel protruding through the holster, and the holster on the same side of the belt as the hand that did the
CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Passing of the Bullwhackers

THE West was changing and hardest hit of all by the new order were the bullwhackers who had freighted so many loads of goods into Wyoming, and who now saw their livelihood taken away by the well-engineered grades, the new track and the faster railroad trains.

These men's vocabularies were suited to primitive roads and blundering, slow-moving oxen. They endured extremes of wind and weather without complaint, and were generous to a fault. The sturdy self-reliance that triumphed over so many early hardships kept them going long after the real need for their services had passed.

More useful than a vocabulary to the bullwhacker was his whip — a sixteen-foot lash made of soft, finely-braided leather attached to a hickory and tapered gradually to a businesslike popper made of the finest buckskin.

This whip was the most valuable of a whacker's possessions, and even in the later days I had the greatest difficulty in borrowing one of these treasures for exhibition at a county fair.

I saw my first bullwhacker at that same Whitewood, South Dakota, where the volunteers fought the fire so valiantly. On the second evening of my stay in the only hotel in the place, I discovered all my belongings had been moved into the landlady's room. She was a weather-beaten slattern and
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far from prepossessing, even to a young and romantic mind.

Her husband, it developed, had discovered her affair with
the star boarder and had promptly started on one of his
periodic drunks. The more he drank, the more indignant
he became. He announced he was going up with his .45 to
her room and put an end to the star boarder that night.

“So I’m puttin’ you in my room an’ I’m takin’ yours,”
she concluded.

The room was large and in the front of the building
overlooking the main street, so I made no protest. I did,
however, take the precaution of hunting up the aggrieved
husband and telling him of the change.

At daybreak I was awakened by the sound of shots. My
first thought was that her husband had forgotten our con-
versation and was about to make good his threats.

Then I heard the creaking and groaning of overburdened
wheels, punctuated now and then by another shot. I
stumbled out of bed and made my way to the window.

Below, two abreast in the rutted street, plodded eight bulls
or oxen bearing ponderous wooden yokes over their necks.
To the rear were two heavily loaded freight wagons.

The bullwhacker’s whip cracked its full length and
the pistol shots were explained. The popper cracked on a lag-
ging ox, removing a bit of hide, accompanied by a “Hi, yah,
you s—of-a-b—.”

At first I thought this particular bullwhacker up to his
knees in the mud as he walked beside the first wagon, but
as he came cursing and popping along, I discovered he had
a man’s broad shoulders and the legs of a small child.

Then “Shorty,” indomitable representative of the old
freighters, saw my nightshirted figure at the hotel window.
He squirted a tremendous jet of tobacco in contempt and
bellowed:

“Now, you blinkety-blank, go back to bed!”

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As for the landlady’s husband, he succeeded in drowning
his sorrows and failed to put in an appearance.

Gradually the pickings of the bullwhackers, the mule
skinners and freighters grew more and more lean. It was
while I was hunting antelope after my return from the Klon-
dike that I met one of these survivors, now fallen on evil
days.

Our party was out in the Pumpkin Butte country, between
Buffalo and Gillette. Being novices we had done no better
than sight a number of these fleet-footed animals. Food was
running low and the nearest source of supplies was far away.

Off in the distance, as we prepared to make camp after
another unsuccessful day, we saw a great cloud of dust. Out
of the dust came fourteen-yoke string of oxen, hauling two
large, empty and rickety freight wagons.

The bullwhacker was sitting alongside the water barrel
on the trail, or second, wagon with his whip on one knee
and the long lash curled around one hand, ready for action.
He was a hard-looking hombre with a black beard streaked
with tobacco juice and a heavy, greasy, woolen shirt that had
never seen soapsuds. One trouser leg was cut off at the knee,
showing the full-length, red flannel underwear which these
men wore, winter and summer.

On the rear of the trail wagon, wrapped in a piece of old
canvas, hung what looked like a quarter of beef. We
hauled him.

“Haw,” he shouted.

He pushed back the big felt hat with its stained and
raveled band and he looked us over, men and beasts, with
a critical eye, sizing up each item in our outfit.

We explained that hunting was bad, we were nearly out
of supplies, and asked if he would sell us some beef.

At that he climbed down from his perch and explained
the loss of his pants leg. He pointed to a mean-looking ox.
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"The critter's got plumb ornery from starvation and tries to gouge me when I yoke up, so I hang the leg over the horns to cover up his eyes."

We repeated the offer to buy a quarter of beef. He cast a critical eye over the oxen.

"There hain't meat on airy one of 'em. Them there critters hain't fitten t' kill."

Walking to the rear of the trail wagon he shouldered the quarter of meat and slung it onto one of our pack horses.

"Here ye air an' welcome," he said briefly and climbed back beside the water barrel.

We tried to pay, but he would not hear of it. Patting an old Sharp's rifle hanging through a worn-out boot at the side of the wagon, he shook his head stubbornly.

"No . . . No. Yore plumb welcome. Betsy'll git me another antelope after sundown."

The wolfer lasted longer than the bullwhackers. Every cow outfit worthy of the name had one man whose job it was to keep the wolves from overrunning the range. These men used their knowledge of the mountains to protect herds from two-footed marauders. Bess and I saw our first wolfer on one of our many pack trips into the Yellowstone. It was autumn. The berries and plums were ripe, and we completed a big leisurely circle across the Big Horns and back through the Crow Indian reservation where grouse abounded and the native trout welcomed any sort of bait dropped into the stream.

We camped one night on such a creek, caught enough trout for supper and shot several grouse for the Dutch oven. As a special treat, Kimmel made dampers, bread cooked in the Indian way out of white man's flour.

Dampers have a flavor all their own. The flour is worked up with water and salt into a big pat of dough that just fills a well-greased frying pan and set next to the glowing coals of a camp fire. When the dough is well browned on one side, the cook gives it a quick toss and browns it on the other.

Sometimes wild plums, choke cherries or bull berries are mixed with the dough before cooking, but old-timers scorn this as too fancy. After we had eaten all the dampers, grouse and trout that our appetites could accommodate, we sat back and relaxed.

Two miles or so above us were the snow-capped peaks of the Big Horns with the pink and orange and gold of a Western sunset playing on them. The sky was filled with floating white clouds and the mountains below the timberline were clad in dark pines that blended with the light brown grass of the camp.

As the sunset faded into dusk and the dusk into darkness, the stars came out and the northern lights played along the horizon in fantastic tints of green and red and cold yellow. Off in the distance we heard the lonesome, long-drawn wail of a wolf. We waited and it sounded again, echoing among the rocks.

"I can have them talking across the hills in no time," said Kimmel, looking across the firelight at us. "Want me to answer the call?"

We nodded and he slipped away in the darkness. Presently he howled in reply and another wolf took up the cry. Another answered, and another, and they kept it up until we tired of the entertainment and turned in.

Frank Kimmel came over from his bed roll a few hours later and shook my shoulder.

" Didn't want to alarm you by blazing away with my sixgun," he said, "but the wolves are closing in on the cave. I can hear them calling for help. Better bring out the old Zulu and give the varmints a blast. It'll scare them away."

So out I came with the single barrel shotgun and away
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went the wolves, to bother our horses no more that night.
Next morning a visitor rode into camp. He was Ben Rheinhart, a wolver for the Spear Cattle Company. He had been out of touch with white men for over two months and insisted we come down to his camp. His camp, he explained, was hidden because his wolf-catching trip was just a blind. Actually he was on the lookout for Indians who had been killing cattle.

After killing a steer they would drag the carcass into the brush, skin it and remove the flesh. Then they would stretch the hide back over the frame, stuff it with brush and weeds, and leave it lying with the back toward the nearby trail. The casual observer riding past saw only what appeared to be the remains of an animal that had frozen to death.

Ben had heard the howling of the wolves and the blast from my shotgun and had come over at daybreak, hoping to make a catch.

To return home we had to cross the Big Horn, no easy matter, for the river was high and dangerous. Kimmel, the wolver and I rode up and down the bank, seeking a likely ford, and finally picked a spot where the water wasn’t too deep.

Kimmel tried it first with his mount, plunging in and back, so the other horses could watch. Then we set our grub and other perishables as high as we could on the packhorses, using the diamond hitch.

When everything was ready we put Bess on a steady old leader, who set off without the slightest hesitation. I waded in, and grabbed his tail as he started to swim.

“Don’t look at the water,” I cautioned my wife. “Don’t turn in the saddle. If you have to fall off, do it on the upside against the current. Then the horse won’t paw you. I’ll be right in back, waiting to help you safely to shore.”

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But the horse was equal to his task and the instructions proved unnecessary. Following us as we made the ford, was Kimmel on my horse, followed by the cavey. When all the animals were safe on our side of the river, we waved good-bye to the wolver and headed for home.
knew it was a weak case for racing those good draft horses.

Mama said, "Look around, can you see anything not done
that you asked me to do in preparing for the threshers?"
But she was smiling as she said it; and Papa hugged her.

Papa's trouble was that, with all his education and enlighten-
ment, he was still awed by machines—and in particular,
by threshing machines. When he left his native Norway,
threshing of grain was accomplished by machines powered
by horse teams driven in an endless circle ("sweep," as it
was called). Steam engines and huge grain separators of the
early days in Eden Valley were a mechanical marvel to Papa.
No farmer could attain higher status than to own a threshing
rig. Many acquired them—most of whom eventually became
bankrupt. Papa was not mechanically minded. He resented
and feared the mechanical monsters, and to my lasting dis-
may, he was one of the few who did not even aspire to own
a rig.

I am sure Mama sometimes compared her husband with
her father who was ingenious in mechanical things. Grandpa
Eittreim was a leader in utilizing and operating farm machines
and road building equipment. At times Papa did show the
spark of an innovator. He conceived that corn could be grown
in the cold climate of Eden Valley, for fodder only, because
of the short growing season. He was probably the first to
purchase a corn binder in Renville County, N.D. He was
perhaps the first to promote tree planting in Eden Valley.

Mama took her amusement where she found it. Her sister
Julia had a well developed funny bone, too. They were truly
kindred souls. In their rather infrequent reunions throughout
their adult lives, merriment was the order of the day. Remi-
niscing mostly, to one within earshot, it seemed that hilarious
episodes in continuous succession were relived. With shaking
sides, almost breathless at times, their mutual entertainment
dialog could continue for hours.

For Mama, I am sure, these occasions afforded a wonder-
ful release from a life burdened with too much seriousness.

EDEN VALLEY LIFE

The homestead in Eden Valley was, in a way,
the "home in America" for Papa's brother and several sisters
who had emigrated to this country. They had all recently
learned the English language, and unquestionably their
speech was strongly accented by the Norwegian. Of course,
I was not aware of that and naturally my own speech was
affected that way, too.

For a little shaver, the high spots of those days were the
visits of my father's close kin. Being the first of my generation,
I was showered with attention and most certainly spoiled.

Aunt Aagot, who came with my father to this country
in 1892, was strikingly good-looking and aristocratic in bear-
ing and manner. She was very efficient and worldly, and she
was a musician with a trained singing voice. I was somewhat
in awe of Aunt Aagot until later years. She was very nice
to me and treated me as an older person.

Aunt Albertine perhaps babyed me the most. She was
pretty and I thought she was the loveliest person in the world.
She was a skilled seamstress.

Aunt Tora was always so thoughtful. At the first issue
of the "Lincoln Pennies," she brought me a purse full. She
too was a musician. Later she was to care for Gladys and
me for a school year in Medicine Lake, Montana.

Aunt Ragnhild was the story lady. She read fairy stories
to us by the hour. When I could read, she brought many
books: Alice in Wonderland, Grimm's Fairy Tales, and some by
Hans Christian Andersen.

Aunt Sigrid, the youngest of the sisters, was, to the small
fry, the epitome of the Fairy Godmother. Her visits were
less prairie, trees were planted. Papa took charge of tree planting. He promoted land improvement. His was one of the first, if not the first, farmyard groves for windbreak and beauty in Eden Valley. It stands to this day.

One day our dear teacher, Miss Wilcox, distributed to each child at his or her desk a mysterious little package with instructions not to open it until she said so. We were all bursting with curiosity. When we had permission to open our gifts, we did not know what to make of them. Teacher had to explain. What each of us had received was a new tooth brush and a tiny tube of tooth paste. To most of us it was our first. After a demonstration of brushing teeth, we all went for a glass of water and gleefully tried it, too. We could not have been happier with a toy.

There was a grubby sport that all of the boys, and some of the girls, indulged in. It was the annual extermination campaign on gophers. North Dakota did not earn the nickname “Flickertail State” for nothing. These rodents that hibernate deep in the ground in the winter were a scourge to the farmers. They bred rapidly and were so numerous they laid waste to many acres of grain fields in the early succulent stage. Organized effort was necessary to control the pests. Each township had a committee with a budget whose sole purpose was to coordinate the drive. They paid a bounty of a penny or two for each gopher disposed of. It was not necessary to bring in the dead gopher as evidence, only its tail.

Every Saturday one of the gopher committee members would be at the schoolhouse to pay bounty for all the tails produced. He paid the same price for little short tails as for long ones. Some of the smarter hunters found they could increase their bounty by cutting the longer tails in two.

Nearly every boy had several gopher traps he would set at entrances to the underground burrows. Older boys had guns. Another method was to pour water down the hole, forcing the animals out. This took a lot of water because the tunnels were long and deep. A steam thresher engine watertank on wheels came in handy for this. An enterprising teenager drove one to school. After it was pumped full of water, it was driven around the nearby prairie accompanied by an eager flock of boys and girls armed with clubs. The horse drawn tank would be stopped close to some gopher holes. With gravity flow through a large hose the tunnels were quickly filled with water, either drowning or driving out the rodents. The wet things scrambled out by the dozens to be attacked by a frenzied mob. Scores succumbed to the clubbing, but some of the attackers got slugged on the back swings. Few gophers escaped. With pocket knives, the tails of those that did not escape were quickly cut off for the bounty. Then the school bell rings and the sport has to cease. The teachers look with suspicion at bulging pockets, perhaps filled with the good trading currency of the season.

Mama, too, was glad when the bounty season was over. She had a dread of finding gopher tails in my pockets, and she vaguely thought there might be a connection between spring epidemics of sickness and the handling and trading in rodent appendages.

Before the school term ended, most of the older boys dropped out to work on their farms. Young ones and girls were allowed to finish. By then it was so hot we were all glad to have school closed.

That summer Arnt Hoel came. He was raised in the same neighborhood in Norway as my father. He could not speak a word of English. Somehow he made the trip alone, showing up with great gesturing in sign language to explain why he had not given Papa notice. He was forgetting for the moment that he had finally reached one who could speak his language as well as he. Papa put him to work and commenced teaching him English. He learned rapidly. With his first earnings he bought a .22 caliber rifle. Later he purchased a camera with many accessories. It was the first camera I had seen outside a photo gallery.

My youngest sister, Signe, was born that summer. On the day of her arrival, while Dr. Keyes, who had delivered her, was puffing a cigar and swapping stories with Papa, Arnt was delegated to take charge of Gladys and me. She was three years old at the time.

Arnt took us on a long walk and shot some gophers on
was marked only by a narrow strip of unplowed prairie, when an ominous black cloud appeared. With the greatest of good fortune Papa spotted a large barn nearby. He headed for it, Nellie on a gallop, and drove it through big double doors as the storm hit. Papa and the farmer owner were barely able to close the barn doors against the sudden hurricane-force wind. Then came hail. The roar on the barn roof was deafening. In a few minutes it was all over, leaving devastation. The farmer’s crops were laid flat under a layer of ice pellets. Chickens were killed and a new born colt was injured. Papa could only thank the man for unwittingly rescuing us. He could do nothing to assuage the heart-broken young man for the damage and loss of the year’s crop. It was an anxious drive home. Papa happily found his fields and animals had been spared.

In the late fall after harvest and with the start of freezing weather, it was time for butchering. Certain of the pigs and cattle were specially fed to fatten them for the winter meat supply. The slaughtering and butchering was usually a neighborhood affair, the crew going from farm to farm for the operation. It was a busy time for both men and women. Wash boilers full of water had to be heated to boiling on the kitchen stove for dipping the slaughtered hogs so the bristles could be scraped from the hides. Some of the meat was packed in salt for next summer’s use. Cuts of beef were salted and buried in wheat bins thus producing a form of “dried beef.” Most of the carcasses were hung in an unheated building and left frozen for the winter’s use. One of Mama’s less inviting jobs was in making “head-cheese” from slaughtered pigs’ heads.

During the summer, meat was scarce except for salt pork and bacon, a slab of which usually hung on the kitchen wall. The summer diet, however, was compensated by an abundance of fresh garden produce. This produce was, of course, “organic.” There was no other kind. For an occasional treat a chicken was killed. Eggs and dairy products were plentiful the year around. On Mama’s table there was always home-made butter and pitchers of fresh milk and thick cream, cold from a deep well. Cream was poured copiously on everything from oatmeal porridge and coffee, to berries and every kind of pie. For a snack I was especially fond of a slice of Mama’s fresh bread spread with honey and a thick layer of sour cream ready for the churn. Oddly, there were no “fatsos” in the family.

Since this has drifted into the area of gastronomy, I would be remiss not to report what was rather a culinary breakthrough. Cooking and home canning of beef for future consumption had become known. Since refrigerated deep-freezing was still much in the future, the canning of meat in glass jars had a real impact on the summer diet. Mama became an expert in the process. Henceforth we had beef on the table frequently in the summer, too. With gravy and creamy mashed potatoes it became my favorite dinner. Even now I would stack it up against Beef Stroganoff in a high class restaurant.

The winter diet, although reinforced with fresh meat, was deficient in fresh vegetables. Stored cabbage, potatoes, rutabagas, and beets in the cellar were certainly balancing factors. And Papa believed in “an apple a day.” Somehow, all through the winter he saw to it that a box of apples was in the cellar. It was imported fruit, mostly from the state of Washington.
Chapter Five

THRESHING

If Papa was filled with awe and respect for the marvel of the day, the steam powered threshing rig, the same applied to his son—only in much greater measure. Indeed, the threshing operation with its crew earned an image in farming communities at least equal, in romance, to round-up time on the cattle ranges with its colorful cowhands and horse wranglers.

The rigs were credited with personalities of meanness, toughness, or amiability, as the case might be, comparable to the characters of ships at sea. The rig itself was comprised of two main elements: (1) the separator that received the ripened wheat on its stem tied in bundles, and delivered all the kernels of grain free of straw and chaff, ready to ship to the flour mills, (2) the steam traction engine which had the dual role of supplying mechanical power to the separator for its knives, rotating cylinders, shakers, sieves, screens, blowers, and elevators, in addition to towing the separator from job to job.

The engine required a crew of up to four. They were the “engineer,” “fireman,” water hauler (“tanker”), and a straw hauler (“straw-boy”). The threshing machine (separator) required a “separator-man” and sometimes an “oiler.” To complete the crew, there were from eight to twelve bundle haulers, each equipped with a pitchfork and a bundle rack on a wagon drawn by a two-horse team. On larger rigs, two “spike pitchers” to speed the unloading of the bundles were required.

The separator continuously produced a cloud of dust and chaff, so the separator-man was usually unrecognizable be-
neath a covering of dust and grease, except for the fact that he always carried a huge oil can for pumping lubricant into the many bearings of the machine, and that he had a bandanna around his neck to pull up over his face in the dustiest locations. To keep the separator running, fully lubricated, and not waste valuable grain into the straw pile, was his responsibility. He always referred to the separator as “she”—feminine gender. She was always either behaving or misbehaving. She might be in a vile temper, or she might be purring like a cat. A grating noise, a pounding, or the shakes could be symptoms of trouble. Dampness of the grain bundles could cause such afflictions as well as to constipate her terribly. That might even cause the engine to stall. His worst dread was to have the farmer point to kernels of grain remaining in the straw pile.

The driving engine was usually of neuter gender. It also had temperament. In those days steam was generated by burning straw under the boiler. The BTU value of straw is so low that it had to be forked into the firebox continuously to maintain boiler pressure. This was the fireman’s job. It was the straw-boy’s job, shuttling from the straw pile, with a small rack and a team of horses, to keep the engine tender full of straw. The fireman also had to watch the water glasses and maintain proper water level in the boiler.

The engine usually did not have many afflictions, so the engineer was often sleeping in a grain shock while threshing went on. One serious problem he did have, occasionally, was dirty or alkali polluted boiler water. This might cause foaming in the boiler, and the engine to cough, jerk, or to otherwise misbehave. The engineer was then close to his job. In rare cases steam boilers exploded. No engineer, if he survived such a calamity, wanted anything like that on his record. He would be blowing off the boiler, cussing and fuming, and telling the tankie in strong terms to find a better source of water or he would throw him in the slough from which he pumped the last tankful. Tirelessly, the engine panted, and the heavy flat belt orbited back and forth to the separator.

This was the great day that threshing would start on our farm; the rig was on its way from a neighbor’s farm. In due course it could be seen and heard approaching. A small boy was watching in spell-bound anticipation. There down the road, was the juggernaut advancing, very slowly, as a glacier, but inexorably. The engine was puffing smoke, snorting, gears growling, steam hissing, and whistle tooting. Behind, docilely following, was the separator—a great cavernous body, her belly between squat wheels wide apart almost dragging on the ground. She waddled like a duck. Indeed, with the scoop shaped feeder high in front, she did resemble a duck.

This time the engine was pulling, in addition to the separator, another very important part to the operation, a “cookcar.” This wooden-frame diner on wheels had bench and table space to feed 24 men in addition to the cooking facilities. It was uncoupled down by the roadside, to be away from the dust and noise. A sturdy, pleasant looking woman stepped out on the deck. She gave us a friendly wave and went to work preparing the next meal for the always hungry men. “Cook-car girls” were usually the top rated cooks in the community.

In the meantime, all of the bundle haulers, with teams and racks, were already out in Papa’s fields, piling up loads of bundles. At least two of them would be fully loaded and driven into the barnyard by the time the thresher was ready to take the harvested grain.

In greasy overalls and cap, standing high, back of the revolving flywheel and over the immense drive wheels, the engineer was steering the engine. He did this by energetic spinning of the large steering wheel, effecting a swiveling, back and forth, of the front truck wheels. A small change of course required a lot of cranking, so the man was very busy. He steered across the barnyard. Papa had taken down the fence wires so the rig could come straight through. The separator was pulled to the chosen location. The engine stopped while it was uncoupled.

At this moment, the little observer was favored by being noticed by the engineer, who knew that he, in his high and mighty position, was making a terrific impression. Ostenta-
tiously moving levers, turning valves, even pulling the whistle cord, with steam hissing, gears clanking, and smelling of hot grease and burning straw, spitting a stream of brown juice from a cheek full of tobacco, he galvanized the iron beast of burden into motion again.

The actions of the engine relative to the immobile separator would now follow a standard pattern. It generated a figure, in slow motion, not unlike the mating serenades of certain birds. He, (the engine) under the practiced guidance of the engineer, would show his prowess to his mate, (the separator) standing expectantly. It was paced off, as in a Virginia Reel, but to the beat, cadence, guttural harmony, and grace of the dinosaurs.

He commenced in a circle, panting, clanking, and hissing. Then he stopped, backed and started several times. Finally, maneuvering by much cranking of the steering wheel, and by changing growling gears, thus sashaying back and forth, he arrived at a position facing her. The engineer furtively looked around to see if the onlookers had appreciated his expertise. The engine was now near the final mating position, facing and precisely in line with the separator. The nuptial connection was made by a heavy woven belt. It was unrolled from the separator and lifted by several men to loop around the flywheel of the engine. The two were now linked together by this rugged, endless, belt encircling flat-faced pulleys on each machine. Always, there was a half twist in the belt between them.

Now she—the separator—begins to show life. Men swarm over her in the set-up procedure. Her feeder box is extended. The big wind-stacker tube is swung around to the rear to blow the straw away from the action. A smaller tube from the grain weigher is guided to a wagon waiting to receive the golden grain. Quickly, all is in readiness. The engine is backed up a bit to put proper tension on the belt for drive friction.

The first of the loaded bundle wagons are driven up, one on each side of the feeder box. The separator-man standing on top of his charge, with a circling motion signals the engineer to start the action. The engineer pushes the throttle lever. Pant, pant, slowly—puff, puff, the beat starts to the separator on its endless journey. Speed gradually increases. Characteristic sounds and motions build up. Finally, up to speed, the engineer jerks the whistle cord. By the toot, the men on top of their bundle rack loads are signalled to start unloading. They pitch the bundles, grain heads first, into the conveyer feeder. The pitchers have to work fast to keep a double line of bundles marching into the cavernous maw. Rotating knives cut the twine ties and the bundles are seen no more.

There are laboring sounds. The pull of the belt causes the separator to heave and shake. There is grinding, vibration, and blowing. There are various internal motions: translation, oscillation, and rotation, as the kernels of grain are violently separated from chaff (pods) and straw. The predominant sound is a moaning hum that varies in pitch and loudness with the volume of bundles going through.

A great golden plume of straw is continuously blown from the wind-stacker at the rear. The elevated weigher, up high, counts the bushels of precious grain as it is dumped down the tube into a wagon box. Pitchers are rhythmically tossing bundles into the feeder. As each rack is emptied, another is driven up to be unloaded. Action settles down to a routine. The whine and drone of the separator and the pulsing “chucka, chucka” of the engine produce a rhythmic chant which from a distance might be the purr of contented jungle cats.

To the observer, these were sublime doings. This was something to live for. To a little boy, it was glorious! He stayed close to the engine. It was the most fascinating. It was the prime mover. The greatest moment came when the engineer lifted the boy up beside him aboard the throbbing giant.

Very high over the great drive wheels, which were rocking back and forth in step with the reciprocating piston, it was a totally new world. The big sizzling, riveted steel boiler was radiating waves of heat. Here was a frightening display of invincible power. The connecting rod from the piston, like a mighty mailed fist, pushed and pulled on the crank
that made the great flywheel roll. Towering way up ahead, the smokestack was jetting steam-exhaust with smoke, like a legendary dragon.

Among other amazing things was the flyball governor; like a whirling dervish, it was dancing up and down, endeavoring to keep the flywheel rotating at constant speed. There were steam pressure gauges, water level glasses, many valves and levers. The fireman, poking straw into the firebox with his pitchfork, paused momentarily to close a valve, open another and let out a roaring jet of live steam. He thus injected replacement water into the boiler. Occasionally he took a breather and reached in his pocket for his box of Copenhagen snuff. Ceremoniously he tapped the metal cover, twisted it off, and took a generous pinch which he placed inside his lower lip. As an afterthought, with a heavy “Hapsburg” grin, he offered the boy a pinch. On the anticipated decline, he said, “Dis snuse are awful goot fer ya,” and he laughed. The friendliness was evident.

To the observer it was wonderment and enchantment. He then resolved to be an engineer of a threshing engine when he grew up.

Later he was to forswear the thresher and decide to be a locomotive driver. Steam locomotives, in their heyday were the most romantic mechanical monsters ever. Along with steam threshing engines they have long been obsolete. What a pity!

Chapter Six

SECRET ITCH

In common with communities all over, Eden Valley was favored with the time honored and colorful institution of peddling. There were many peddlers. A very few were unscrupulous. These were mainly the high pressure artists who came once and were never seen again. The vendors that returned, on a more or less regular schedule, were dependable. They went from farm to farm in horse drawn buggies or enclosed spring wagons. Some of these salesmen supplied essentials not available in country stores, or even in the ubiquitous Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalogs.

Worthy of mention are the peddlers that sold only their services. The tinsmith or tinker was needed regularly for mending leaky tubs, boilers, pails, tea-kettles, and other kitchen utensils. Every time the traveling scissors grinder made his visit, there would be plenty of knives, axes, shears, etc., for him to sharpen.

Of the merchandising peddlers, one was very popular with the children. This was the J. R. Watkins representative who came around with his goods three or four times a year. Patent medicines, liniments and flavorings for cooking were his chief items for sale.

Mr. Pepke was our Watkins man. He came year after year so he was well known. When his circuit brought him to Eden Valley, the news traveled from farm to farm fast. Mama usually anticipated his coming by compiling a list of cooking needs; for instance his vanilla extract which she thought to be of good quality. The reason the children liked Pepke was that he had sidelines of chewing gum and highly colored
nity. Uncle Gustave, big and very tall, was one of the gentlest, kindest men I ever knew. He and Mama were childhood playmates.

Then there were the Narlands, Aunt Julia and Uncle Alfred, who lived in Radcliffe, six miles east of Ellsworth, also on the Chicago and Northwestern line. Theirs was a delightful family. We were there often. With my cousins and Uncle Alfred, it was always a rollicking time. The sisters, Mama and Aunt Julia, regaled each other by the hour in reliving escapades of their youth.

It was early spring when we returned to North Dakota; Papa had missed us terribly. Preparations were already underway for the big move. The selected location is in what was then Valley County, Montana, 22 miles west of Scobey and about 60 miles northeast of Glasgow, the County Seat. At this time, Scobey became the terminus of another branch of the Great Northern Railroad.

Three of my father's sisters—Agot, later Mrs. Watt; Tora, married to James Sparling, and Albertine, married to Joe Anderson—had all homesteaded near Glasgow, which is on the main line of the Great Northern Railroad. (Now Burlington-Northern.)

I will never know the full reasons my parents decided to settle in that specific locality, which was to be known as Peerless, Montana. Part of the motivation may have been plain "pioneer spirit." Agriculturally the soil, though being very different from Eden Valley's, is very good. (Note: See table at the end of the chapter.) Reports from the relatives near Glasgow had it that it always rained for growing crops in the northern part of Valley County. That surely had influence, unreliable as such reports likely were.

Unquestionably, Papa's farm in North Dakota was difficult. It was so flat the land tended to stay too wet at planting time. The ground was very rocky. Papa was actually catapulted onto the backs of the horses from a riding ploow upon colliding with an underground boulder. The clinching motivation was doubtless the fact that one-quarter Section was insufficient land on which to make a living for a family. On the other hand, Papa could and did rent adjacent land to his advantage. In fact he could have bought better land across the road.

Anyway the die was cast. Early in June, 1914, all possessions were loaded into two Great Northern Railroad emigrant freight cars. Horses, cattle, chickens, cats, the dog Fido, farm machinery, household goods—everything was put aboard. Papa and Uncle would live in the box cars on the several days trip. Mama, my sisters, and I, once again, would have the luxury of riding in a passenger train.

Before leaving Eden Valley, the family was honored and feted by the whole community. There were many sad good-byes, and many resolutions to return, at least for visiting. But the farewells were forever, though we were to be removed, by road map, only 200 miles. By automobile at present the separation is less than four hours.

While we would still be in the vast treeless prairie plain, there would be great differences. Our parents, education-conscious though they were, actually resettled in a sparsely populated area that was not to have a school of any consequence until my sisters, younger than I, were teenagers! Parenthetically, I should interject that Mama, to her satisfaction, was to organize the first school in the Peerless vicinity. Her three pupils were: Signe, Violet Skogen (whom Mama had ushered into this world) and Karnes Sundby. She taught them and drew pay as a public school teacher once again, if only for a few months.

Services and conveniences would be sorely lacking. For the first year, the nearest postal service would be in Scobey—twenty-two miles away. Later, the little inland village of Tande, three miles east, was favored with twice-a-week mail service. Never was mail delivered direct to farm and ranch homes as it was in Eden Valley; the telephone was several decades in the future. The nearest telephone (and telegraph) was in Scobey until eleven years later when the GNRR branch was extended through what became the village of Peerless. What there was of Tande was then moved to the new Peerless location.

Medical and dental services were never available nearer than Scobey. We would soon learn that there were no near
neighbors. Four miles away lived the only other woman in the settlement, Mrs. Skogen. The Skogen’s daughter was the first white child born in the vicinity. Mama reluctantly but proudly “midwifed” at Violet’s birth. In another contrast with Eden Valley where nearly all the settlers were married—in the new neighborhood, all were bachelors except Mr. Skogen and Papa.

Whatever the contrasts, the inducements, and the motivations, the irrevocable step had been taken. The vicissitudes of the future would, all too soon, dim the memory of Eden Valley.

**Chapter Nine**

**WESTWARD HO!**

In the first hours, as we were passing through Minot, North Dakota, the train stopped briefly. On an adjacent siding, a freight train was standing. Joyfully, we could identify “our” emigrant cars. We waved eagerly and got Uncle’s attention. Griny and sleepy, he came to our coach and chatted with us a bit. Papa, making up for several days of round-the-clock leave taking and loading, was sound asleep in the box car. While we were talking, Fido tried to jump from the car, but he was on a short leash so he hung stran-gling. Uncle dashed to rescue him. At that moment our train pulled away, so we did not know whether our good dog Fido survived the noose or not.

On the way up the Scobey branch of the GNRR, Mama and we children detrained at Medicine Lake, Montana, to stay with the Sparlings (Aunt Tora and Uncle Jim), where Uncle Jim now had a job with his brother in the hardware business. We arrived a day or two ahead of the freight train carrying Papa, Uncle, and all our possessions. Then we were on watch, hoping to see them as they went through enroute to Scobey.

The freight train finally roared in and came to a grinding halt at the Medicine Lake depot, the locomotive tooting, panting, clanking and hissing. Down the line of cars, Papa and Uncle appeared and jumped to the ground. I dashed to them in great joy, and found Fido was O.K. The men were very hungry, dirty, and tired. They said the animals were having a very rough time. The train crew was unnecessarily careless in bumping cars during switching. Several of the horses and cattle were injured; one was made permanently lame.

Aunt Tora hastily prepared a tasty noon meal for the
Two of the men tied handkerchiefs on their arms and danced ladies' parts. The building shook. Large quantities of Norwegian cookery and coffee were consumed. There was no beer, wine or spirits. Maybe nips were sneaked out in the barn.

Merriment was unrestrained until dawn. Some of the horses had to be tied outside and were blanketed against the subzero temperature. They were so chilled as to be scarcely able to move. Quickly the guests hitched the horses to their bobsleds and drove away, singing, with sleigh bells jingling.

The other social event was a visit to some rather distant neighbors we had not met. These were the Solems who had settled 10 miles due south on the boundary of the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.

We set off in an open bobsled pulled by a hardy team of horses. Horses acclimated to the area grow winter fur on backs and bellies, several inches thick. They look, in winter, much fatter and heavier than they really are. They become almost akin to arctic animals, such as musk ox and caribou, in their resistance to cold.

There was no road or trail of any kind to follow. Papa was guided by the sun and the white terrain. There was the West Fork of the Poplar River to cross, but it was frozen solid.

Due to difficult travel conditions it took us over three hours to cover the ten miles. We arrived without warning or invitation, but the welcome was very cordial. There was a number of people in the Solem household and they accommodated us, in addition, with seeming ease, typical of prairie hospitality. There was warm friendliness and an evident desire to develop neighborly relations. Good food abounded. A parlor organ graced the house, and singing soon commenced.

The Solems had been settled only a few months longer than we had. There were many common problems to discuss. One son in the Solem family was my age, so a friendship was started. In the ensuing years, Francis and I made infrequent visits back and forth on horseback; the sojourns spent mostly "cowboy ing."

Winter Sojourn

Mama was anxious to get started on our way home. It was dusk, clouded over, and a light snow was falling. The goodbyes were finally said and we drove off. Papa was confident he could follow the sleigh tracks on the return. In fact the horses themselves could follow them better in the growing darkness than the driver.

In recrossing the river, one of the horses slipped on the ice where the snow had blown away. The horses had not been shod with spikes, so on clear ice they were helpless. Papa had an awful time with them. He had to unhitch and partially unharness them in the darkness to get the frightened team under control. By sliding and pushing the fallen horse to the snow, he got her on her feet. The sled was then brought to the team over the ice and he was able to hitch up again.

Mama was frightened. We were wholly dependent on the horses to bring us home that night. An injury to either of them could have been tragic, and Mama knew it. The darkness was complete but we were on our way again. It was very quiet, with only the squeaking sound of hooves and sled runners on the hard snow. The temperature was falling. The intense cold made the snow grainy and made pulling harder for the horses. On the other hand, the team was benefited by firmer snow for their footing.

Mama was becoming more and more apprehensive. She suspected Papa was not sure of his directions. He discovered that they had lost the sled tracks he was trying to follow, but he said nothing about it. He did try to calm her, but he was not very convincing.

They did not know how long they had been traveling. If there had been a timepiece, it could not have been read in the total darkness. Light snow continued to fall. The horses plodded steadily—but were we heading toward home?

Mama asked Papa, "Do you think you are going in the right direction?"

He tried to assure her that he was. But it was a lame defense. Everyone was feeling the intense cold. Our parents had wrapped us children and buried us in straw the best they could to try to keep us warm. Signe was whimpering and complaining of cold feet.
Chapter Fourteen

PRAIRIE FIRE

The most feared of all the natural hazards of the great plains was the prairie fire. It could be the most sudden and the most devastating. The thickly growing prairie "wool" in the late summer and fall becomes highly combustible.

For insurance against this hazard, the homesteader's first duty was to make a "fire guard" around his place. It consisted of fresh parallel furrows, thirty or forty feet apart, plowed around the land to be protected. Usually the homesteaders went together and encompassed several farms with the guard. The grass between the furrows was set afire to complete the barrier. The burning had to be done very carefully to insure that the flames stayed between the furrows, so a wild prairie fire did not result. Therefore this burning (or back-firing as it was called) had to be done when there was no wind. Usually this was at night when falling dew made it safer.

It was a fascinating sight, this building of fire guards at night. Barrels of water were on hand, with wet sacks to use in beating out any stray flames. All nearby homesteaders turned out to help in this operation of preventing catastrophe. It was exciting. From Devil's Canyon came Ray Cheney and the Nels (Sailor) Brennas. Ray, who had homesteaded in Saskatchewan just a few miles north, emigrated back to the U.S.A. to homestead again. Sailor was a romantic figure who had spent several years before the mast on an ocean sailing vessel.

Mr. Lawson, B. O. Tande, Harvey Tingle, Skenes (who emigrated from England), Arnold Horgen, and Aunt Sigrid...
Chapter Nineteen

TUMBLEWEED

The unwitting honyockers had to pay dearly in many ways for fencing in the prairie and plowing under the primeval sod. One of their severest retributions was the coming of the tumbleweed.

There are at least two plants that earned the name "tumbleweed." On the Montana prairie they were Tumbling Mustard (Sisymbrium altissimum) and Russian Thistle (Salsola kali lenifolia). Both are annuals, growing from seed each year. Both are ideally adapted for growing in arid climates. They take root only in plowed soils. Were it not for the honyockers, the tumbleweeds would not have had a chance on the prairie. The natural hardy prairie turf is completely hostile to weeds, as long as it is unplowed.

Both plants are bushy, nearly spherical in shape when full grown. They ripen in fall, covered with seed pods. After the first frost the main stem becomes so brittle a strong wind can break it off, allowing the bush to roll. It is in this manner the weed propagates itself. A single tumbleweed can roll many miles, spreading its seed all the way.

Tumbling Mustard is a relatively benign weed. It was not the source of havoc to the early prairie farmer that Russian Thistle was. The latter is called a thistle because each of its seeds is a sharp barb. It is known to have come from Russia, late in the last century, probably mixed with imported drought resistant grass seed or flax seed. The rolling bush is a brittle, bristly ball.

These weeds did not plague the farmers immediately when they broke their first furrows. It took a little time for
the plant pests to follow the western advance of homesteaders.

When my folks settled in the Peerless neighborhood, they soon became aware that the menacing weed was advancing. The Russian Thistle had reached Medicine Lake, Montana, roughly two years before it arrived at Peerless, farther west. The spread was at perhaps 50 miles a year. Even after the arrival of the plague, it did not cause much concern for a year or two, because, as it happened, these were not arid years. There was ample rainfall and crops were good. But the weed was lurking near, waiting for droughts. Such seasons were close at hand. The advent was ominous, even dramatic.

Winds blow nearly always on the Montana prairie, especially in late fall. It was late October, in the first of three years of drought and crop failures, when I was awakened before dawn by the wind that was howling louder than usual. The little house was shaking with gusts. But I had no intention of leaving bed to survey a scene that was becoming more desolate every day.

To begin with, I wanted to be in Scobey where my mother and sisters were, so I could make entry—late as it would be—in school. Papa had kept me on the farm unusually late this fall because my help was needed. Due to the poor crops there was little money to pay hired hands. I was in a rebellious mood. The bleakness of the parched earth had drained my normal enthusiasm for the farm. Papa and Uncle Torstein were striving valiantly to salvage enough from the fields to carry the animals through the coming winter. Lately, my uncooperativeness was making their task no easier.

In my cozy bed I blanked out the dreary picture and went back to sleep. But the sleep was interrupted—immediately it seemed. It was a child’s shrill voice: “Orland, Orland, the hills are moving, the hills are moving, everything is running away!” It was my little cousin, Ardy’s Anderson, calling me. Her mother, my Aunt Ragnhild, was temporarily keeping house for her brothers.

Meaningless as this excited chatter was, it awakened me and made me curious enough to get up and hurriedly dress. Amazingly, to all appearances, the hills were moving! It was
Toward evening, to be sure, the ranks were thinned. By now every inch of plowed ground was covered with the malignant seed. Some of the wagon roads in fence lanes were buried deep in thorny masses. All fences, standing or fallen, were like hedgerows of the spiny bushes. The air was filled with windblown particles. It was an angry, bloodshot sun as it sank into a smoldering horizon.

My elders had watched the cataclysmic phenomenon in unbelieving horror. All the horses and cattle huddled in defense against the flying burrs that pricked their hides and stung their eyes. There was little talk. Outdoors it was too windy and nasty for conversation.

Indoors at suppertime, there was bewildered dismay and little talk. One comment of Papa’s I remember: “All we need now, to finish us off, is for the miserable stuff to catch fire.”

As everyone knew, the ripe dry tumbleweeds were as combustible as pine shavings.

The next morning was colder but calm. Except for the piled rows along the fences, the fields were denuded desolation. The warmth and coziness in the house, with a hearty breakfast, belied the austere outdoors. Conversation still lagged, and Papa seemed moody. Finally he said to me in resigned tones, “Let’s go to Scobey, to Mama and the girls. You can stay there and enter school. I guess it is about time you did.”

This, for me, changed the whole outlook. I had something to look forward to. The trip to town would be a temporary release from the dreary farm for Papa, and it was to be a long one for me. When I would return the next spring, the tough winter would be over; hope and enthusiasm would prevail as it does perennially at planting time.

But in bidding farewell to Uncle Torstein, Aunt Ragnhild, and little Ardyx, my joy was dampened by a feeling that I was somewhat of a deserter. As Papa and I hitched the horses to the wagon and left, it was only little Ardyx chattering away who was cheerful.

There was an aftermath to the tumbleweed event that is worth the telling. As with many natural scourges, there are compensating factors that become effective in the course of time. This was true even of the Russian Thistle. Perhaps it is only in retrospect that anything redeeming can be appreciated. After all, this pest hit the farmer when he was already beset by a major climatic disaster—drought.

The next year developed into another one of severe drought. After the spring planting, most of the seed did not even germinate in the ground. Winds dried the soil more, and some of it blew away in a manner that was to be catastrophic in later years known as the “bust bowl” era. It was nearly midsummer and no rain.

But suddenly, like overnight, the planted fields turned green! Not from the seed that was planted; it was Russian Thistle that had been seeded to saturation that fall before. The tumbleweed had germinated in the dust-dry soil. Quickly the bushes were inches high! From now on, the planted seed had no chance whatever—even if a soaking rain had allowed it to germinate.

One planted crop was an exception. Oddly enough, it had a Russian origin, too. It was the Giant Russian Sunflower. Papa had planted, somewhat as an experiment, a whole field of it, in rows like corn. It germinated in spite of the drought and grew amazingly. By mid-July some stalks were as tall as twelve feet. Papa decided to try harvesting it with a corn binder while the plants were still green. It worked. The stalks, with leaves and giant blossoms were tied in unwieldy bundles by the binder and set in the field in shocks.

I was driving the horses, operating this corn binder one day, harvesting the Russian Sunflowers. At quitting time, as I drove into the farmyard, there was much excitement. My sisters rushed to me and yelled, “Did you see the aeroplane, did you see the aeroplane?”

“An aeroplane, what do you mean?”

They said, “The aeroplane flew over and the man waved to us!”

Everyone on the farm was talking excitedly about it. They were surprised that I had not heard or seen the flying machine. The more I comprehended, the gloomier I became. The reason I did not hear—and therefore did not see the World War I biplane—was because the noise of the corn
binder I was riding had drowned out the engine and propeller sound of the airplane. I was depressed for weeks. All the others in the family had seen an airplane in flight. I had not! . . . But back to thistles:

Soon the fields infested with Russian Thistle were covered thickly with a dark-green, velvety growth, two feet high. While it is green, it is not prickly. At that stage it is nearly as succulent as alfalfa. Word was circulating among farmers that, cut in a succulent stage, it was a possible substitute for winter cattle feed. But there was a problem. How to cure it and keep it until needed?

Papa and Uncle hit upon a happy solution. The thistle was cut with horse-drawn mowers and raked into windrows and piles in the field. After partially drying, it was hauled to the barnyard where it was stacked in layers with the bundles of sunflower stalks. The alternate-layer idea was the trick. This was the savior of the cows that winter. I assisted in the stacking operation. Building the stacks of these two dissimilar plants was a miserable job. I hated it. It was like trying to make a haystack out of fence pickets and green sponges.

The third year of the drought was a repetition of the second. Russian Thistle and Giant Russian Sunflower again provided a subsistence for livestock. Against the tumbleweed, however, the poor honyocker had little left. It could be likened to a holdup man who takes all of your money but, in a final moment of generosity, gives you back two dimes for a telephone call.

Rainfall in the following years was more plentiful. Planted seeds germinated ahead of the weeds and crops were generally good. The Russian Thistle began to fade away as a pestilence and as a last resort savior. Even in the later “dust bowl” years, the weed did not regain its ferocious character. It may have been mutability of the plant species. It may have been the dogged cussedness of the honyocker. It is true that the farmers adopted better dry farming methods such as summer fallowing and strip farming.

The honyockers and their descendants are no longer honyockers. Those who persevered have status. Like the ranchers who resisted them, they are now big operators. With powered, fast-traveling machines for soil preparation, planting, and harvesting, one operator may farm thousands of acres of crop land.
of money the county thus borrowed—only a guess now—was $75,000, then a princely sum. As the negotiations were being concluded, the underwriting agent informed the three commissioners that customarily each member of the Board would be awarded a substantial portion of the underwriting commission. Reportedly, it was an astounded agent when, without hesitation, the kick-back was unanimously declined.

The sun and the wind was rapidly drying the harvested grain that remained standing in shocks and I was eager to get back to the threshing operation. It was a great feeling to take my place on the crew again, this time as a regular with all prerogatives.

In due course we commenced threshing at our farm. At this point there was another addition to our crew. He was a young Indian from the Fort Peck Reservation. Everyone called him John. He could speak no English. He received instructions by sign language and by aping what the others of the crew did. Loren allowed him to stay on. His horses were skittish, skinny, pinto broncos. Initiating them to the threshing machine was precarious. On one score he would not copy the rest of the crew; his loads as he brought them in were always small, but we were sure he was not a member of the IWW.

John greeted all with a trusting, friendly smile. With him were his squaw and a cute little son. They lived in their tepee, set up in our farmyard. The squaw was rarely seen. She seemed very young, had long black braids and wore a colorful skirt. Aunt Aagot made friendly overtures to her with little success.

John had the privilidge of eating his meals in the cookcar with the rest of the crew, but he never came in. What they had for food in the tepee was a mystery. Smoke curled continuously from the top, indicating something was cooking most of the time. Despite his skimpy bundle loads, John was capable of hard work and he belied the reputation of Indians being lazy. Everyone was his friend. The needleworkers did not know how to needle him.

The end of the run was in sight. The days were noticeably shorter and cooler. I still had my spot between Ole Lien and Nels Sundby. Occasionally I could load fast enough to get to the rig in time to have a chat and roll a cigarette with Ole before he started to unload. Then Nels would join me while Ole unloaded.

The machine moaned and groaned as it ceaselessly devoured the continuous flow of grain bundles fed to it, spewing straw into mountainous piles, and weighing and dumping the golden grain into wagons to be hauled to granaries or elevators. Rarely was Loren Fladager forced to unclutch the engine for an emergency stop of the separator. He and Carl Lien practiced preventive maintenance; all servicing and repair was done at night. It was a beautifully coordinated operation.

I learned the satisfaction of being on a winning team. My chief problem was a ravenous hunger that plagued me the last couple of hours before dinner and supper. The mares, too, were thriving in spite of the long hours of hard work. They were becoming so accustomed to the routine that I scarcely needed to speak to them as they pulled the wagon along the shock rows as I tossed the bundles into the rack. I loved the gentle brutes. I loved it all. Too soon it would end.

Among the personal rewards was standing beside Al Lawson, pitching into the feeder as we alternated in perfect timing, laying the bundles in precisely the right order on the moving canvas. He could impart, with a subtle twist to the pitchfork, just the right motion to the bundle as it sailed through the air, that it invariably landed at the right spot and alignment on the conveyer, and the right moment in time. This skill came naturally to him. At work he maintained a mental picture of where he would spear, in succession, the next three or four grain bundles from the top of the spongy load, while applying proper leverage on the fork to conserve energy, never losing rhythm, and relaxing muscles at the end of every stroke. He had what it took to continue this grueling labor for twelve working hours, day after day. Seldom were there rest periods for spike pitchers.

What I learned of this craft was by sink-or-swim survival, and by observation. Al was sparing in his praise, but finally
he gave friendly acceptance to my performance; however, it was in small measure I developed his endurance and his economy of motion. The beauty of his handling of a pitchfork was mindful of the grace of an angler as he delicately lays a dry fly far out—precisely where a trout is lurking.

It was a pleasure to be a part of this team. True, it was very arduous and demanding but the rewards were more than wages. Sadly, such skills and group effort, even on farms, is largely in the past. Giant power-combines now harvest and thresh in one operation. The romance of team labor is gone.

With a final groan the machine swallowed the last bundle and stopped for good. We finished the run at Nels Sundby's farm. The crew dissolved in all directions, hurrying home to attend to many things that had been put aside during threshing.

Until that instant I could not comprehend that the finish would be so complete and final. A sudden tight feeling in my throat betrayed the deep attachment I had formed for those men, machines, and animals. There had been a challenge, a mountain to be climbed. With painful effort and teamwork, it had been conquered. But now at the pinnacle it had collapsed into a valley of emptiness for me. The crew had disbanded abruptly, indifferently, leaving a void of silent desolation. I felt let down, deflated.

Loren Fladager and Carl Lien stayed with the rig, coupling up everything, including the cook-car, for towing back to the Fladager farm. I lingered for my pay. All the other members of the crew were farmers who applied their wages to offset their threshing bill. Indian John had not stayed to the finish.

Loren took out his worn timekeeper book and tallied up my working days. I had not missed an hour of threshing time and it totaled to 25 3/4 days. I had earned $180.25. I felt wealthy. As he handed me the check, Loren paid me his best compliment: “You're gonna be a good worker.” I did not feel so depressed.

Mable and Queen felt the run had ended. They would have galloped all the way home if I had not held them in.
WHEN
THE ROCKIES BURNED

TODAY in Montana when old-timers mention the Big Fire, they
mean only one: the fire that swept through the Rocky Mountains in Au-
gust of 1910 and destroyed about three
million acres of forest, along with any
number of mountain towns. At the time,
my father and I were living on a Mon-
tana prairie homestead. We had gone
there several years previously from Ex-
ter, Washington, where the rest of
our family still lived. Within less than
a week after the fire started, smoke cov-
ered our prairie, and ashes fell silently
from the smoke-hidden sky. During the
first few days, we wondered where the
smoke was coming from. We didn’t
think of the Rockies, because they were
so far away that we could see their low
outlines only on exceptionally clear days.
In fact, it didn’t occur to us that any
kind of forest fire might be responsible,
since the prairie for miles around was
absolutely treeless. We knew that the
source of the smoke was not a prairie
fire; we had seen plenty of prairie fires
and had put them out when they started
crossing our homestead, and their smoke
was nothing compared to what we were
now seeing. We were without newspa-
papers, of course, or a telephone, and we
had had no contact recently with any
of our neighbors, the nearest of whom
lived nine miles away, so we’d had no
chance of getting outside news. Some
time earlier, however, we had heard
rumors that Halley’s comet, which that
year was paying one of its rare visits to
the vicinity of the earth, might come so
close as to set the earth afire and possi-
bly destroy it. To my father, who was a
devout Methodist, and to me, who was
about ten years old at the time, these
rumors seemed the most reasonable ex-
planation of what was happening.

Strange things were going on, cer-
tainly. Once, for instance, when I
opened the door of our shack, which
was a simple, one-room affair, with a
window in each wall and a stovepipe
on the roof, I saw a herd of antelope
standing just outside and looking green-
ish yellow in the smoke. They were so
close I could see their nostrils quivering.
Another time, a herd of wild horses,
something we rarely saw except far off,
passed eerily within a few yards of our
shack. The sun, whenever we could get
a glimpse of it, looked green, and so did
my father’s face and hands when I saw
him some distance away through the
smoke; close up, they appeared yellow.

My father, who was such a strict
Methodist that he read passages from the Bible aloud to me each morning after breakfast and each evening after supper, did not seem in the least surprised that the world should be coming to an end, with Halley's comet responsible. One evening, as he sat beside our one lamp, which now threw out queer glows of green, yellow, and blue, he read to me from the Book of Revelation: 

"... and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth ... and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke..."

My father, I knew, could face up to the end of the world, because he had committed no sins, but I couldn't, and I wished I had repented long before. One of my sins had been swearing. For example, Molly, one of our two plow horses, would frequently lag behind when hitched to the plow, and once, besides pegging a chunk of doby at her, I had yelled, "Molly, get going, God damn you!" And I had told lies, too, as when I told my father I had driven a wolf away from the barn, though I knew well enough that it was only a large coyote.

ONE day, not long after the coming of the smoke and ashes, I was standing behind the shack and filling a bucket from our water barrel when suddenly I heard a sound and looked up and there was a man on horseback—a stranger, whose face and hands were green. Before I could speak, he asked me if he could water his horse. I said of course he could.

"Thanks. Where's your old man?"

"He's in the barn. You want me to call him?"

"That can wait."

The stranger dismounted. His chaps were lashed to the back of his saddle, and I noticed that under the left side of his hat he had only half an ear. I wondered what had happened to him.

I guess I must have been staring at him, because he said, "Now, how about this water?"

I finished filling the bucket, and said, "It's good water, Mister. We get it from the old reservoir about a mile away. We boil what we use ourselves. But we don't boil it for the horses."

"I understand that," he said. Then he asked, "Does your old man know yet what's causin' all this smoke?"

I hesitated about answering, and while I was hesitating my father came along. "Good day," he said to the..."
stranger. "This isn't much of a day, though, to be out riding."

"No, it ain't. Have you heard what's going on? Some say the Rocky Mountains are a-burnin' down."

"Halley's comet," I put in.

The stranger smiled and said, "Yes, some say that, too."

"The first of the earth to go," my father said, unperturbed.

The stranger looked curiously at him. "Well, I don't rightly know about that," he said, "but they say it's a big fire."

My father and the stranger went on talking. I couldn't hear clearly what they were saying, because I had put the bucket in front of the stranger's horse—I had been getting ready to water our own horses—and a horse makes so much noise drinking. When the stranger's horse had finished, I heard my father offer the stranger something to eat.

"It would be most welcome," the stranger said, "on account I ain't had none since yesterday." I said I'd tie up his horse, but he told me that wasn't necessary, so I followed him and my father inside the shack. From what they said, I gathered that the stranger had been in our locality before—long ago—and now he wanted to know if, even in the smoke, my father could help him locate on our homestead the place where one certain coulee joined another one.

"I know where you mean," I interrupted. The place would be easy to find, despite the smoke, I told him, because there were only two coulees on our homestead, and I knew exactly where they joined.

"Good," the stranger said after I was through explaining. "We'll go soon as I have a bite to eat."

While he sat at our table and ate a dish of potatoes, which my father had brought to him, I heard a wagon drive into the yard, and as the arrival of any
The beer without peer

wagon was an event, I hurried outside. In the wagon were Mr. and Mrs. Powers, our nearest neighbors, who lived to the south of us.

“What’s happening? What’s happening?” Mrs. Powers demanded, while almost tumbling out of the wagon in her anxiety. “We’ve not been able to learn a thing.”

“Most likely the end of the world,” I told her. “Anyhow, the Rockies are burning up already. There’s someone inside who just now told us, and he’s still talking with my father.”

“God help us!” exclaimed Mrs. Powers.

“It’s Halley’s comet that’s doing it,” I said.

Gathering her skirts and long apron close to her, so she wouldn’t trip over them, Mrs. Powers rushed inside the shack. I stayed outside with Mr. Powers. When he had climbed down from the wagon, he asked me how much water was left in the reservoir. The Frazier Reservoir, to which he referred, was the only body of water anywhere around on the prairie. Long before we took up our homestead, sheep owners had built the reservoir by erecting a dam of earth across a coulee, and this dam held the water from the spring freshets, after the snows melted. In the summer, though, much of the water usually dried up, leaving the banks white with alkali.

“There’s some water in the reservoir,” I told Mr. Powers. “I mean there was some there when I was to the reservoir a week ago. But that was before the smoke came down.”

“Well, as long’s there’s some water there—that’s the reason my Annie and me come here with the wagon. You bet your dumb boots, though, we had a time gettin’ here through the smoke, and our horses just managed to find their way along the wagon trail to here. But when the worst comes to the worst, and I allow it will, we can drive into the reservoir—and sit.”

“Sit out the end of the world like that?” I asked.

“I’m not talking about the end of the world,” Mr. Powers said. “But there’s sure somethin’ funny going on, all right.” He went into the shack, and I followed him.

Mrs. Powers was talking so excitedly to my father as we entered that he finally told her to calm down. God’s will was God’s will, he said. Nobody did any introducing, because we didn’t know the stranger’s name, and to ask any stranger his name was considered impolite. As soon as the stranger finished

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eating, he turned to me and said, "Come, boy, it's time for you to be showin' me, if you can, that spot between the two coulees."

"Yes, sir."

My father said he'd come along to help keep us from getting lost in the smoke. He said he and I would walk, but the stranger said he would ride his horse, because he had something important in his saddlebag that he would need—if we did find the spot. Mr. and Mrs. Powers said they wanted to wait in the shack, where they would be nearer the reservoir.

Outside, the smoke seemed to have thickened. Occasionally, the green sun would appear briefly and send down strange streaks of colored light—the kind I had seen in Bible pictures. I wondered what the stranger was up to. In spite of the smoke, I was having no difficulty finding my way, for I was familiar with each little bump, roll, or sometime buffalo wallow, and presently I was able to say to the stranger, "Here's the first coulee, Mister, and it joins the other one just a little ways from here."

The stranger reined in his horse and got down. "I'll start looking round myself, then," he said. "This ground does start looking a bit familiar, all right, just as I was expecting." Leading his horse by the reins, he began inspecting the prairie closely, often kicking a rock aside, and even testing the ground here and there by digging into it with his heel.

Finally, I asked, "What are you looking for, Mister?"

My father said, "Son, stop asking questions. I know what he's looking for. He's already told me."

The stranger said to my father, "The boy, he led us to the right location, and that's a fact. Our camp was about here, as I recollect, and I buried him about here."

"Buried who?" I couldn't help asking.

"Son, keep quiet," my father said.

"Anyways," the stranger continued, ignoring my questions, "this should be close enough, I'm thinking, for the purpose. So now I want to buy a tiny bit of this ground from you, just a tiny bit, so's it won't get in the way of your plowing. Maybe a square yard or so. Would ten dollars be enough, you suppose?"

"There's no paying for anything," my father answered, "You're welcome to it."

"Boy," the stranger then said to me,
you fetch some of these rocks, and you make a little pile of them right here—where my toe's pointing."

"Yes, Mister."

"And while you're doing that, I want to do me a bit o' carvin' Wood's plenty scarce around here, I know, so I brought my own wood along."

He opened one of his saddlebags and took out a flat piece of wood. While I was gathering rocks, I saw him carving something on the wood with a hunting knife. "There," he said after carving for quite a while. "That'll about do it." And he put away his knife.

Then he carried the piece of wood over to the rocks I had piled, and propped it up among them. The carving, though crude, was easy for me to read: "TIM WHO WAS KILLED SUMWHERE HER IN 1904."

"Quite a godly work for you to do," my father said, reading the carving.

"But what was he killed by, Mister?" I asked.

"Oh—Tim, you mean? Oh, him—he was killed by me," the stranger answered.

"Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," my father said.

"Ain't quite saying who's repenting, or who ain't—as Tim, he sure had it comin' to him. He sure did. But even so, on one way or 'nother, with what's going on in the Rockies, it just weren't right for even Tim to be out here with no marker. So maybe, as you say, it is kind of repenting."

"Yes, I think it is," my father answered.

ON the way back to our shack, I walked in front, but every now and then I half turned my head and stole a look at the stranger, without his seeing me. So he killed a man! He was the first murderer I'd ever seen, but he didn't look like my idea of one. Except for that half ear, he didn't look much different from my father.

When we reached our yard, we saw that a second wagon had driven up—a wagon heaped with all kinds of belongings. Inside the shack, we found that the new arrivals were Mr. and Mrs. Higgins, whose homestead lay a good many miles to the west of us. Mrs. Higgins and Mrs. Powers were crying together at a great rate.

My father said, "Lamentations will do you women no good."

Mrs. Higgins wiped her face with the hem of her apron. "But we heard that whole towns in the foothills are being demolished by flame, and that..."
portions of the comet are going to strike the prairie next—any moment."

"Yes, that's probably to be expected," my father answered calmly. "But the point is, have you seen any flames yet near your place?"

"Oh, no, we ain't seen no flames—yet," Mrs. Higgins said. "Just all this smoke, the same as here. But we heard, besides, how the beasts of the mountains are fleeing this way to get away from the fire—fleeing this way. I tell you, Hadn't we better be drivin' into the reservoir right now to escape the flames and the beasts?"

"You're not going to escape no beasts in the reservoir," Mr. Powers said, "if they're coming this way. They're all going to be right in there, too. We're all sure going to look funny sittin' on our wagons in that reservoir, with grizzlies and mountain lions sittin' up there in the wagons with us."

"Well, if you'll excuse me," said the stranger, "I'll be heading out."

"To the reservoir?" Mrs. Higgins asked.

"No, Ma'am, to the Rockies. Halley's comet or no Halley's comet, there might be something a hand could do up there by way of helping one way or 'nother." He turned to my father and added, "You been mighty hospitable. Now I'll be gettin' on my horse."

My father and I went outside with the stranger, and after he was on his horse my father asked him, "You're really heading for the Rockies, then, are you?"

"Yes, that's where I'm a-going, as I said." With that, the stranger rode off.

"Won't he likely be burned or killed when he gets to the Rockies?" I asked my father.

"It's God's will," he said.

Watching the stranger disappear into the smoke, I didn't know what to think about him. He'd killed a man and yet he'd come back to put up a marker for

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him, and now he was going off to lend a hand in the Rockies. My father and I went inside the shack, where we sat down with the Higgines and the Powers. The women were no longer crying. There was nothing to do right now but wait. As we sat there, I kept thinking of the stranger riding across the prairie, and pretty soon I had a mighty high regard for what he was doing. But I didn’t say so to my father. He’d probably think it foolish for a man to try fighting a fire that was burning up the world.

—Max Miller

A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

[From the Ankara (Turkey) Week]

Those who attended the performance of Carmen last Thursday at the Opera House were certainly pleasantly surprised when, at the very beginning of the opera, a speaker announced:

—The direction has the pleasure to inform the audience that to-night on a special occasion, the soprano of the BAVARIAN STATE THEATER will perform as Carmen..."

It was a change after all and we had heard that the premier of Carmen in which one of our famed sopranos sang the leading role, was a fiasco.

As a whole, with a few exceptions, the performance had failed to live up to the State Operas usual standards according to a general criticism and to public opinion...So the name of the Bavarian State Theater, a center of good music, impressed us all...

After the beautiful and colorful ouverture, on went the opera, with the classical scene in a little village square in Seville and with our always good chorus... You may certainly remember the entrance of Carmen, who always brings the warm and colorfully perfume of Spain, of Seville, and the changable temperament and teasing aroma of Spanish women... But, oh God, imagine our surprise, disillusion or what ever you may call it, at the appearance of an old, and faded lady as Carmen... However, the opera went on, the German soprano showing some talent and a once-upon-a-time dated technique, but failing each time she had to push a farto... Fortunately she was always a constant shock for the eyes.

The sight of an aged woman, braving the years with an exaggerated make up, dragging her corpulence about and hopping in imitation of feline walk of Carmen! Somebody in the front row whispered:

—O Carmen what have they done to you?

The explanation came during the interval... To correct the bad impression of the premier, and since the understudy of Carmen was indisposed, the Director of the Opera had asked the German soprano a 6! years old teacher in the Istanbul conservatory, to perform as Carmen. Her answer was:

—Oh non. I can only be the grand mother of Carmen.

But finally they persuaded her, but
and I suspect that if anyone had ever asked the sawyer to turn out some tongue-and-grooved, he would very quickly have had a peavy imbedded in his skull.

The sawmill could, however, turn out beautiful white pine of limited dimensions suitable for cabin building.

How did we get the lumber to the top of a mountain for a Lookout cabin? By muleback, of course. The mule was the universal freight facility once you left the wagon road!

We would cut the two-by-fours and one-by-fours into six or eight foot lengths and then tie them into bundles. We would put one bundle on each side of a mule, pointing downward, with the upper ends crossed over the top of the mules back. Then we would rope it solidly to his pack saddle.

You had to know your mules. Some were inclined to panic when they saw that menacing cross of lumber just a foot or so behind their ears.

Panic? I'm afraid I do injustice to the mule family. A mule will take apparent fright if he has space to buck off the pack and make you laboriously load it on him again. But---if you start him up a trail where his bucking or plunging might cause him to roll over a cliff and break his own neck, then he will become surprising docile. A mule has a great sense of self preservation. A horse is completely different. He will run and plunge until he kills himself if he takes fright at the look of a pack on his back. That is why mule pack-strings rather than those made up of horses.

Speaking of the idiosyncrasies of mules; we had one in the Forest named "Fudge". She was a big strong bay animal with a very tricky disposition. It was always great fun to have the youngest recruit trail monkey hold Fudge by the halter while she was being loaded with the two packs! She had a real uncanny sense of timing and just as the last rope knot on the two packs was about to be tied to her pack saddle, she would start to buck and run, throw off both packs, dragging the trail monkey with her by the halter!
I myself was victimized, not knowing Fudge. The two packs were bucked off and Fudge and I ended up knee deep in the edge of the Oro Grande River! The trick with Fudge as they then showed me was to take the halter rope and put a loop -- a "hackamore" over her nose. It didn't have to be tight, just as long as it was there Fudge would be as docile as a kitten.

We had another mule named "Ginger". He was a small stocky animal of reddish roan color. His trick was that just as you were about to lay a 150 lb. pack on his saddle, he would take a step away from you. Well, you would wrench your back and legs and try it again and Ginger would take another step away!

With Ginger, when you got acquainted, you would slap his left front leg. He would obligingly lift the leg. Then you would put a rope tie around the knee to keep the leg bent and Ginger would stand and doze while you put on his two packs.

Well, back to Turk and my summer on Pot Mountain. The mountain itself was an old volcanic crater on the northside - the highest point - where the cabin was located. From the cabin, located on the edge of the old crater, a ridge extended south for a mile or so, like a handle. The oldtimers had a slightly more descriptive name for the Pot, but the early map makers cleaned it up.

The result of the peculiar geography of Pot Mountain was that we could see our own smokechaser area to the east, the west and the north, but there was a section of about thirty degrees at the southwest which was blocked by Pot's handle.

So our routine as "Lookouts" was to get up about three in the morning, go up on the roof to the mapboard tower and carefully scan all the territory we could see from there--the heavy and slightly more humid air of nighttime would settle the haze and you could spot smokes much better just at daylight. Heaven help you, however, if you spotted a fog or cloud wisp in anothers territory and sent him scurrying to it only to find it was just fog!
Larson Creek was not only a smokechaser station, it was also an over-
night stopping station for the pack trains which supplied Canyon Ranger District
and it thereby had a lot more supplies than just a Lookout like Pot.

The winterizing of a combined station such as Larson Creek was much more
of a job than winterizing Pot......

So, in a couple of days, I'm off for Larson Creek. It was a distance of
about 15 miles by ridge-top through the trees but with no trails. You just
went the easiest way. However, it was all down-hill from Pot at 7500 feet
elevation to Larson Creek at 2000 feet.

When I got within a few miles of the river, I began to find some real
well-worn trails -- not as the Forest Service would have made them, but as the
deer and the elk had made them.

Then I remembered---- the "Larson Creek Elk Lick"! It was famous
throughout the Clearwater Forest as the place where the elk went to lick the
salty water seeping over a big rock bluff.

When I arrived a little closer I went more carefully and with as little
noise as possible.

I heard the bugling whistle of a bull elk or two and then I knew I was
real close to the lick. It was no trouble to find it because all the trails
down the ridge were converging on a small valley. It was an unusual sight when
I finally arrived at the "lick".

There was a rock ledge, granite, about 100 feet high, almost vertical. The
granite ledge was perhaps 200 feet wide. Over the entire surface was a fine
film of water seeping down the face.

All around the small valley, the fallen and half-fallen trees were rubbed
bare of bark and actually polished by the visiting elks scratching themselves.
It smelled like nothing as much as the cattle yard on the ranch at home. As I sneaked up to the lick, I counted thirteen elk. Some were licking the rock, some were lying down like cattle and others were rubbing the trees to soothe whatever irritations they had.

I watched fascinated for several minutes and then a movement of mine caught the attention of a bull elk. He let out a piercing bugle and they all left -- clumsily, but none the less -- rapidly.

So on down to Larson Creek.

I arrived there in mid-afternoon and Roy knew I was coming. He said, "the ranger told me you would be down today." "I have a treat before I cook supper".

Whereupon, he brought out a crockery jug of homemade wine.

He said, "I've been practicing all summer long, and this is my best product -- I make it from the dried and canned fruit the Forest Station furnishes us, plus the sugar and a cake of yeast and now in the fall, some huckleberries".

It was delicious. Also powerful.

We worked around the station for a couple of days and reported in to the Ranger Station.

The boss said, "Ok, come in and fall any snags which are over-hanging the trail and fix up the telephone line as you come."

Next morning, we get ready to head for the Bungalow. Roy had several jugs of his "best product" and he said, "I know that if I leave it here, these winter game ranger surveyors will drink it all up". "I'm going to be back here next summer so let's take it out into the woods and bury it." We did just that -- all except one jug which I suggested we take along with us.

We planned to take two days to go on into the Ranger Station, some 17 miles away since we were working on the way.

We started early in the morning and worked all day long, falling snags and bolstering up the telephone lines. About sundown, we arrived at Cave Creek Camp
Chancellor Edward C. Elliott,
State Capitol,
Helena, Montana.

Dear Sir:

The following is a brief report of the assistance rendered at the hospitals by members of the faculty, students, and friends during the epidemic of Influenza which has been prevalent at the College since October 16.

Miss Carlotta M. Ford, of the home economics department, at the request of the Red Cross, took charge of the dietetics for the first two weeks. She was assisted by Miss Alba Bales head of the home economics department. At the end of that time Miss Ford became ill and Miss Bales has had charge of the food both for the attendants and patients. Too much cannot be said in praise of the management of Miss Bales under dangerous and trying conditions. Professor J. H. Holst assumed responsibility for the expenditures for food and attended to all orders. He himself was ill with Influenza but fortunately had a light case. Had it not been for the voluntary assistance of the members of the Faculty, students and friends it would have been impossible to have cared for the sick. The largest number of patients in one day was 73. The task of nursing and caring for these in an improvised hospital was very great. It is impossible to speak of the individual services of those who assisted. At a later date a more detailed report will be made to you. The nurses from the Deaconess hospital were furnished by the Red Cross Society. Some of our students and faculty assisted in the city hospital. It may be that some names have been unintentionally omitted. They will be included in the final report. The report from Dr. Blair giving the number of sick is made separately.

The following list gives but a slight indication of the valuable service rendered.

Very truly yours,

[Signature]

President.
December 11, 1918.

Dr. H. H. Swain,
Office of the Chancellor,
State Capitol,
Helena, Montana.

Dear Sir:

Replying to your communication of December 7 regarding the epidemic here at the College, I have the following report to make:

Total number of contagious diseases in the College:

- Scarlet Fever, 20
- Smallpox, 1
- Influenza, 86

The above is for the S.A.T.C.

With regard to other students who have had Influenza there are 12. There were 11 members of the faculty and staff who had the Influenza.

Including all of those who have been ill, there were only four deaths. These four deaths were men in the S.A.T.C. who died from Influenza. Miss Edith Luther who was employed in the State Board of Health Water Laboratory here at the College also died of Influenza. She had been nursing Influenza patients.

The date that the College closed because of the epidemic was October 16th.

Nearly all of the women in Hamilton Hall remained for about one month after College closed and courses of instruction were given them there. There have been some students doing work by correspondence where this has been possible.

Respectfully yours,

[Signature]

Registrar.
The most distressing event connected with the epidemic at the College was the death of Miss Edith Luther. Miss Luther was graduated from the College in 1917. Since that time she had been employed as analyst in the State Food Laboratory here at the college. She was a most estimable woman as well as an efficient chemist. She volunteered her services as a nurse, contracted the Influenza and later had pneumonia. Like all other volunteers she risked her life when she went into the hospital and paid the supreme price. At a later date special exercises will be held in acknowledgment of her services.