

Man of the Forest
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The COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

The OLDEST AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL in the WORLD

A Cold Morning Chore



This Issue—HOW TO BUY A FARM—By Harry R. O'Brien

THE MAN OF THE FOREST

By Zane Grey, Author of Wildfire

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK TENNEY JOHNSON

XVIII

ANSON'S gang did not bestir themselves at the usual early sunrise hour common to all woodsmen, hunters or outlaws. These companions, Anson and Riggs included, might have hated to see the dawn come.

It meant only another meager meal, then the weary packing and the long, long ride to nowhere in particular, and another meager meal—all toiled for without even the necessities of satisfactory living; assuredly without the thrilling hopes that made their life significant, and certainly with a growing sense of approaching calamity.

The outlaw leader rose surly and cross-grained. He had to boot Burt to drive him out for the horses. Riggs followed him. Shady Jones did nothing except grumble. Wilson, by common consent, always made the sour-dough bread; and he was slow about it this morning. Anson and Moze did the rest of the work with alacrity. The girl did not come out of her shelter.

"Is she dead?" growled Anson.

"No, she ain't," replied Wilson, looking up. "She's sleepin'. Let her sleep. She'd be better off if she was daid."

"A-huh! So would all of this hyar outfit," was Anson's response.

"Wal, Sna-ake, I shore reckon we'll all be thet there soon," drawled Wilson in his familiar, cool and irritating tone that said so much more than the content of the words.

Anson did not address the Texas member of his party again. Burt rode bareback into camp, driving half the number of the horses; Riggs followed shortly with several more. But three were missed, one of them being Anson's favorite. He would not have budged without that horse. During breakfast he growled about his lazy men and after the meal tried to urge them off. Riggs went unwillingly. Burt refused to go at all.

"Nix. I footed them hills all I'm a-goin' to," he said. "An' from now on I rustle my own hoss."

The leader glared his reception of this opposition. Then he ordered Shady and Moze out to do their share.

"Jim, you're the best tracker in this outfit. Suppose you go," suggested Anson. "You allus used to be the first one off."

"Times has changed, Snake," was the imperturbable reply.

"Wal, won't you go?" demanded the leader impatiently.

"I shore won't."

Wilson did not look or intimate in any way that he would not leave the girl in camp with one or any or all of Anson's gang, but the truth was as significant as if he had shouted it. The slow-thinking Moze gave Wilson a sinister look.

"Boss, ain't it funny how a pretty wench —" began Shady Jones sarcastically.

"Shut up, you fool!" broke in Anson. "Come on, I'll help rustle them hosses."

After they had gone Burt took his rifle and strolled off into the forest. Then the girl appeared. Her hair was down, her face pale, with dark shadows. She asked for water to wash her face. Wilson pointed to the brook, and as she walked slowly toward it he took a comb and a clean scarf from his pack and carried them to her.

Upon her return to the camp fire she looked very different, with her hair arranged.

"Miss, air you hungry?" asked Wilson.

"Yes, I am," she replied.

He helped her to portions of bread, venison and gravy and a cup of coffee. Evidently she relished the meat, but she had to force down the rest.

"Where are they all?" she asked.

"Rustlin' the hosses."

Probably she divined that he did not want to talk, for the fleeting glance she gave him attested to a thought that his voice or demeanor had changed. Presently she sought a seat under the aspen tree out of the sun and the smoke continually

blowing in her face; and there she stayed, a forlorn little figure, for all the resolute lips and defiant eyes.

The Texan paced to and fro beside the camp fire with bent head and hands locked behind him. But for the swinging gun he would have resembled a lanky farmer, coatless and hatless, with his brown vest open, his trousers stuck in the tops of the high boots.

And neither he nor the girl changed their positions relatively for a long time. At length, however, after peering into the woods and listening, he remarked to the girl that he would be back in a moment, and then walked off round the spruces.

No sooner had he disappeared—in fact so quickly afterward that it presupposed design instead of accident—than Riggs came running from the opposite side of the glade. He ran straight to the girl, who sprang to her feet.

"I hid—two of the—horses," he panted, husky with excitement. "I'll take—two saddles. You grab some grub. We'll run for it."

"No," she cried, stepping back.

"But it's not safe—for us—here," he said hurriedly, glancing all round. "I'll take you—home. I swear. . . . Not safe, I tell you; this gang's after me. Hurry!"

He laid hold of two saddles, one with each hand. The moment had reddened his face, brightened his eyes, made his action strong.

"I'm safer here with this outlaw gang," she replied.

"You won't come!" His face began to distort. He dropped his hold on the saddles.

"Harve Riggs, I'd rather become a toy and a rag for these ruffians than spend an hour alone with you," she flashed at him in unquenchable hate.

"I'll drag you!"

He seized her, but could not hold her. Breaking away she screamed "Help!"

That whitened his face, drove him to frenzy. Leaping forward he struck her a hard blow across the mouth. It staggered her. And tripping on a saddle she fell. His hands flew to her throat, ready to choke her. But she lay still and held her tongue. Then he dragged her to her feet.



The Last Hour of Travel Was Tedious and Toilsome—a Zigzag Winding, Breaking, Climbing Hunt

"Hurry now—grab that pack—an' follow me." Again Riggs laid hold of the two saddles. A desperate gleam, baleful and vainglorious, flashed over his face. This was his adventure.

The girl's eyes dilated. They looked beyond him. Again her lips opened.

"Scream again an' I'll kill you!" he cried hoarsely and swiftly. The very opening of her lips had terrified Riggs.

"Reckon one scream was enough," spoke a voice, slow, but without the drawl, easy and cool, yet incalculable in some terrible sense.

Riggs wheeled with an inarticulate cry. Wilson stood a few paces off with his gun half leveled, low down. His face seemed as usual, only his eyes held a quivering light intensity, like boiling molten silver.

"Girl, what made thet blood on your mouth?"

"Riggs hit me!" she whispered. Then at something she feared or saw or divined she shrank back, dropped on her knees and crawled into the spruce shelter.

"Wal, Riggs, I'd invite you to draw if thet'd be any use," said Wilson. This speech was reflective, yet it hurried a little.

Riggs could not draw or move or speak. He seemed turned to stone, except his jaw, which slowly fell.

"Harve Riggs, gun-man from down Missouri way!" continued the voice of incalculable intent. "Reckon you've looked into a heap of gun barrels in your day. Shore! Wal, look in this heah one!"

Wilson deliberately leveled the gun on a line with Riggs' starting eyes.

"Wasn't you heard to brag in Turner's saloon—thet you could see lead comin'—an' dodge it? Shore you must be swift! . . . Dodge this heah bullet!"

The gun spouted flame and boomed. One of Riggs' starting, popping eyes—the right one—went out, like a lamp. The other rolled horribly, then set in blank, dead fixedness. Riggs swayed in slow motion until a lost balance felled him heavily, an inert mass.

Wilson bent over the prostrate form. Strange, violent contrast to the cool scorn of the preceding moment! Hissing, spitting, as if poisoned by passion, he burst with the hate that his character had forbidden him to express on a living counterfeit.

Wilson was shaken as if by a palsy. He choked over passionate, incoherent invective. It was class hate first; then the hate of real manhood for a craven dastard; then the hate of disgrace for a murder. No man so fair as a gun-fighter in the Western creed of an "even break"!

Wilson's terrible cataclysm of passion passed. Straightening up he sheathed his weapon and began a slow pace before the fire. Not many moments afterward he jerked his head high and listened. Horses were softly thudding through the forest. Soon Anson rode into sight with his men and one of the strayed horses. It chanced, too, that young Burt appeared on the other side of the glade. He walked quickly, as one who anticipated news.

As he dismounted Snake Anson espied the dead man. "Jim! I thought I heard a shot!"

The others exclaimed and leaped off their horses to view the prostrate form with that curiosity and strange fear common to all men confronted by sight of sudden death.

That emotion was only momentary.

"Shot his lamp out!" ejaculated Moze.

"Wonder how Gun-man Riggs liked thet plumb center peg!" exclaimed Shady Jones with a hard laugh.

"Back of his head all gone!" gasped young Burt. Not improbably he had not seen a great many bullet-marked men.

"Jim! The long-haired fool didn't try to draw on you?" exclaimed Snake Anson, astounded.

Wilson neither spoke nor ceased his pacing.

"What was it over?" added Anson curiously.

"He hit the gurl," replied Wilson.

Then there were long-drawn exclamations all round and glance met glance.

"Jim, you saved me the job," continued the outlaw leader. "An' I'm much obliged. Fellars, search Riggs an' we'll divvy. . . . Thet all right, Jim?"

"Shore, an' you can have my share."

They found bank notes in the man's pocket and considerable gold, worn in a money belt round his waist. Shady Jones appropriated his boots and Moze his gun. Then they left him as he had fallen.

"Jim, you'll have to track them lost hosses. Two still missin', an' one of them's mine," called Anson as Wilson paced to the end of his beat.

The girl heard Anson, for she put her head out of the spruce shelter and said: "Riggs said he'd hid two of the horses. They must be close. He came that way."

"Howdy, kid. Thet's good news," replied Anson. His spirits were rising rapidly. "He must hev wanted you to slope with him."

"Yes. I wouldn't go."

"An' then he hit you?"

"Yes."

"Wal, recallin' your talk of yestiddy, I can't see as Mister Riggs lasted much longer hyar than he'd hev lasted in Texas. We've some of thet great country right in our outfit."

The girl withdrew her white face.

"It's break camp, boys," was the leader's order. "A couple of you look up them hosses. They'll be hid in some thick spruces. The rest of us'll pack."

Soon the gang was on the move, heading toward the height of land and swerving from it only to find soft and grassy ground that would not leave any tracks. They did not travel more than a dozen miles during the afternoon, but they climbed bench after bench until they reached the timbered plateau that stretched in sheer black slope up to the peaks. Here rose the great and gloomy forest of firs and pines, with the spruce overshadowed and thinned out. The last hour of travel was tedious and toilsome—a zigzag, winding, breaking, climbing hunt for the kind of camp site suited to Anson's fancy.

At last, for no reason that could have been manifest to a good woodsman, he chose a gloomy bowl in the center of the densest forest that had been traversed. The opening, if such it could have been called, was not a park or even a glade. A dark cliff, with strange holes, rose to one side, but not so high as the lofty pines that brushed it. Along its base babbled a brook, running over such formation of rock that from different points near at hand it gave forth different sounds—some singing, others melodious, and one at least of a hollow, weird, deep sound, not loud, but strangely penetrating.

"Spooky, I say," observed Shady.

Wilson performed for the girl very much the same service as he had the night before. Only he advised her not to starve herself; she must eat to keep up her strength. She complied at the expense of considerable effort.

As it had been a back-breaking day, in which all of them, except the girl, had climbed miles on foot, they did not linger awake long enough after supper to learn what a wild, weird and pitch-black spot the outlaw leader had chosen. The outlaws, fugitives now, slept the sleep of the weary, and heard nothing. They awoke with the sun, when the forest seemed smoky in a golden gloom, when light and bird and squirrel proclaimed the day.

The horses had not strayed out of this basin during the night, a circumstance that Anson was not slow to appreciate. "It ain't no cheerful camp, but I never seen a safer place to hole up in," he remarked to Wilson.

"Wal, yes—if any place is safe," replied that ally dubiously.

"We can watch our back tracks. There ain't any other way to git in hyar thet I see."

"Snake, we was tolerable fair sheep rustlers, but we're no good woodsmen."

Anson grumbled his disdain of this comrade who had once been his mainstay. Then he sent Burt out to hunt fresh meat and engaged his other men at cards. As they now had the means to gamble for, they at once became absorbed. Wilson smoked and divided his thoughtful gaze between the gamblers and the drooping figure of the girl. The morning air was keen, and she, evidently not caring to be near her captors beside the camp fire, had sought the only sunny spot in this gloomy dell. A couple of hours passed; the sun climbed high; the air grew warmer. Once the outlaw leader raised his head to scan the heavily-timbered slopes that inclosed the camp.

"Jim, them hosses are strayin' off," he observed.

Wilson leisurely rose and stalked off across the small open patches in the direction of the horses. They had grazed round from the right toward the outlet of the brook. Here headed a ravine, dense and green. Two of the horses had gone down. Wilson evidently heard them, though they were not in sight, and he circled somewhat so as to get ahead of them and drive them back. The invisible brook ran down over the rocks with murmur and babble. He halted with instinctive action. He listened. Forest sounds, soft, lulling, came on the warm, pine-scented breeze. It would have taken no keen ear to hear soft and rapid, padded footfalls.

He moved on cautiously and turned into a little open mossy spot, brown-matted and odorous, full of ferns and bluebells. In the middle of this, deep in the moss, he espied a huge round track of a cougar. He bent over it. Suddenly he stiffened, then straightened guardedly. At that instant he received a hard prod in the back. Throwing up his hands he stood still, then slowly turned.

A tall hunter in gray buckskin, gray-eyed and square-jawed, had him covered with a cocked rifle. And beside this hunter stood a monster cougar, snarling and blinking.

XIX

"HOWDY, Dale," drawled Wilson. "Reckon you're a little previous on me."

"Sh-h! Not so loud," said the hunter in a low voice. "You're Jim Wilson?"

"Shore am. Say, Dale, you showed up soon. Or did you jest happen to run acrost us?"

"I've trailed you. Wilson, I'm after the girl."

"I knowed thet when I seen you!"

The cougar seemed actuated by the threatening position of his master, and he opened his mouth, showing great yellow

fangs, and spat at Wilson. The outlaw apparently had no fear of Dale or the cocked rifle, but that huge, snarling cat occasioned him uneasiness.

"Wilson, I've heard you spoken of as a white outlaw," said Dale.

"Mebbe. But shore I'll be a scared one in a minnit. Dale, he's goin' to jump me!"

"The cougar won't jump you unless I make him. Wilson, if I let you go will you get the girl for me?"

"Wal, lemme see. Supposin' I refuse?" queried Wilson shrewdly.

"Then, one way or another, it's all up with you."

"Reckon I ain't got much choice. Yes, I'll do it. But, Dale, are you goin' to take my word for thet an' let me go back to Anson?"

"Yes, I am. You're no fool. An' I believe you're square. I've got Anson and his gang corralled. You can't slip me—not in these woods. I could run off your horses—pick you off one by one—or turn the cougar loose on you at night."

"Shore. It's your game. Anson dealt himself this hand. . . . Between you an' me, Dale, I never liked the deal."

"Who shot Riggs?"

"Wal, yours truly was round when thet come off," replied Wilson with an involuntary little shudder. The thought made him sick.

"The girl—is she safe—unharm'd?" queried Dale hurriedly.

"She's shore jest as safe an' sound as when she was home. Dale, she's the gamest kid thet ever breathed! Why, no one could hev ever made me believe a girl, a kid like her, could hev the nerve she's got. Nothin's happened to her 'cept Riggs hit her in the mouth. . . . I killed him fer thet. . . . I believe it's been workin' in me to save her somehow! Now it'll not be so hard."

"But how?" demanded Dale.

"Lemme see. . . . Wal, I've got to sneak her out of camp an' meet you. Thet's all."

"It must be done quick."

"But, Dale, listen," remonstrated Wilson earnestly. "Too quick'll be as bad as

too slow. Snake is sore these days, gittin' sorer all the time. He might savvy some-thin', if I ain't careful, an' kill the girl or do her harm. I know these fellars. They're all ready to go to pieces. An' shore I must play safe. Shore it'd be safer to have a plan."

Wilson's shrewd, light eyes gleamed with an idea. He was about to lower one of his upraised hands, evidently to point to the cougar, when he thought better of that.

"Anson's scared of cougars. Mebbe we can scare him an' the gang so it'd be easy to sneak the girl off. Can you make thet big brute do tricks? Rush the camp at night an' squall an' chase off the horses?"

"I'll guarantee to scare Anson out of ten years' growth," replied Dale.

"Shore it's a go then," resumed Wilson as if glad. "I'll post the girl—give her a hunch to do her part. You sneak up to-night jest before dark. I'll hev the gang worked up. An' then you put the cougar to his tricks, whatever you want. When the gang gits wild I'll grab the girl an' pack her off down heah or somewheres about an' whistle fer you. . . . But mebbe thet ain't so good. If thet cougar comes pilin' into camp he might jump me instead of one of the gang. An' another hunch: He might slope up on me in the dark when I was tryin' to find you. Thet ain't appealin' to me."

"Wilson, this cougar is a pet," replied Dale. "You think he's dangerous, but he's not. No more than a kitten. He only looks fierce. He has never been hurt by a person an' he's never fought anythin' himself but deer an' bear. I can make him trail any scent. But the truth is I couldn't make him hurt you or anybody. All the same he can be made to scare the hair off anyone who doesn't know him."

"Shore thet settles me. I'll be havin' a grand joke while them fellars is scared to death. . . . Dale, you can depend on me. An' I'm beholden to you fer what'll square me some with myself. . . . To-night; an' if it won't work, then to-morrer night shore!"

Dale lowered the rifle. The big cougar spat again. Wilson dropped his hands, and

stepping forward split the green wall of intersecting spruce branches. Then he hurried up the ravine toward the glen. Once there, in sight of his comrades, his action and expression changed.

"Hosses all thar, Jim?" asked Anson as he picked up his cards.

"Shore. They act awful queer, them hosses," replied Wilson. "They're afraid of somethin'."

"A-huh! Silvertip, mebbe," muttered Anson. "Jim, you jest keep watch of them hosses. We'd be done if some tarnal varmint stampeded them."

"Reckon I'm elected to do all the work now," complained Wilson, "while you card sharps cheat each other. Rustle the hosses—an' water an' firewood. Cook an' wash. Hey?"

"No one I ever seen can do them camp tricks any better'n Jim Wilson," replied Anson.

"Jim, you're a lady's man, an' thar's our pretty hoodoo over thar to feed an' amoose," remarked Shady Jones with a smile that disarmed his speech.

The outlaws guffawed.

"Git out, Jim, you're breakin' up the game," said Moze, who appeared loser.

"Wal, thet gurl would starve if it wasn't fer me," replied Wilson genially, and he walked over toward her, beginning to address her, quite loudly, as he approached:

"Wal, miss, I'm elected cook, an' I'd shore like to heah what you fancy fer dinner."

The outlaws heard, for they guffawed again. "Jim shore is funny!" exclaimed Anson.

The girl looked up, amazed. Wilson was winking at her, and when he got near he began to speak rapidly and low:

"I jest met Dale down in the woods with his pet cougar. He's after you. I'm goin' to help him git you safe away. Now you do your part. I want you to pretend you've gone crazy. Savvy? Act out of your head! Shore I don't care what you do or say, only act crazy. An' don't be scared. We're goin' to scare the gang so I'll hev a chance to sneak you away. To-night or to-morrer—shore."

Before he began to speak she was pale, sad, dull of eye. Swiftly with his words she was transformed, and when he had ended she did not appear the same girl. She gave him one blazing flash of comprehension and nodded her head rapidly.

"Yes, I understand. I'll do it!" she whispered.

The outlaw turned slowly away with the most abstract air, confounded amidst his shrewd acting, and he did not collect himself until halfway back to his comrades. Then, beginning to hum an old darky tune, he stirred up and replenished the fire and set about preparation for the midday meal. But he did not miss anything going on round him. He saw the girl go into her shelter and come out with her hair all down over her face. Wilson, back to his comrades, grinned his glee, and he wagged his head as if he thought the situation was developing favorably.

The gambling outlaws, however, did not at once see the girl preening herself and smoothing her long hair in a way calculated to startle.

"Busted!" ejaculated Anson with a curse as he slammed down his cards. "If I ain't hoodooed I'm a two-bit of a gambler!"

"Sartin you're hoodooed," said Shady Jones. "Is thet jest dawnin' on you?"

"Boss, you play like a cow stuck in the mud," remarked Moze laconically.

"Fellars, it ain't funny," declared Anson with pathetic gravity. "I'm jest gittin' on to myself. Somethin's wrong. Since way last fall, no luck—nothin' but the wust end of everythin'. I ain't blamin' anybody. I'm the boss. It's me thet's off."

"Snake, shore it was the gurl deal you made," rejoined Wilson, who had listened. "I told you. Our troubles hev only begun. An' I can see the wind-up. Look!"

Wilson pointed to where the girl stood, her hair flying wildly all over her face and shoulders. She was making most elaborate bows to an old stump, sweeping the ground with her tresses.

Anson stared. He grew utterly astounded. His amaze was ludicrous. And the other two men looked to stare, to equal their leader's bewilderment.

"What's come over her?" asked Anson dubiously. "Must hev perked up. . . . But she ain't feelin' thet gay!"

Wilson tapped his forehead with a significant finger. "Shore I was scared of her this mawnin'," he whispered.

(Continued on Page 44)



"Girl, What Made Thet Blood on Your Mouth?"

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The Man of the Forest

(Continued from Page 21)

"Naw!" exclaimed Anson incredulously. "If she hain't queer I never seen no queer wimmin," vouchsafed Shady Jones. Anson nodded solemnly. He did not believe the evidence of his sight, but the facts seemed stunning. As if the girl were a dangerous, incomprehensible thing, he approached her step by step. Wilson followed, and the others appeared drawn irresistibly.

"Hey thar, kid!" called Anson hoarsely. The girl drew her slight form up haughtily. Through her spreading tresses her eyes gleamed unnaturally upon the outlaw leader. But she deigned not to reply. "Hey thar, you Rayner girl," added Anson lamely. "What's ailin' you?" "My lord, did you address me?" she asked loftily.

"Aw!" breathed Anson heavily. "Ophelia awaits your command, my lord. I have been gathering flowers," she said sweetly, holding up her empty hands as if they contained a bouquet. Shady Jones exploded in convulsed laughter. But his merriment was not shared. And suddenly it brought disaster upon him. The girl flew at him.

"Why do you croak, you toad? I will have you whipped and put in irons, you scullion," she cried passionately.

Anson plucked up courage enough to touch her. "Aw! Now, Ophelia—" Probably he meant to try to humor her, but she screamed, and he jumped back as if she might burn him. She screamed shrilly in wild, staccato notes: "You! You!" She pointed her finger at the outlaw leader. "You brute to women! You ran off from your wife!"

Anson turned plum color and then slowly white. The girl must have sent a random shot home.

"And now the devil's turned you into a snake—a long scaly snake with green eyes! Ugh! You'll crawl on your belly soon—when my cowboy finds you. And he'll tramp you in the dust."

She floated away from them and began to whirl gracefully, arms spread and hair flying; and then, apparently oblivious of the staring men, she broke into a low sweet song. Next she danced round a pine, then danced into her little green inclosure, from which presently she sent out the most doleful moans.

"Aw! What a shame!" burst out Anson. "Thet fine, healthy, nervy kid! Clean gone! Daffy! Crazier'n a bedbug!" "No luck'll ever come our way agin," predicted Shady mournfully.

"It beats me, boss—it beats me," muttered Moze.

"A crazy woman on my hands! If thet ain't the last straw!" broke out Anson tragically as he turned away. Then he swore a thundering oath. "Crazy or not, I'll git gold out of thet kid!" he roared.

"But, man, talk sense. Are you gittin' daffy too? I declare, this outfit's been eatin' loco. You can't git gold fer her!" said Wilson deliberately.

"Why can't I?" "Cause we're tracked. I feel it in my senses."

"Wal, if I see or hear anythin' I'll knock the girl on the head an' we'll dig out of hyar," replied Anson sullenly.

"Then you'll shore hev to knock Jim Wilson on the haid first," said Wilson.

"Jim! You wouldn't go back on me!" implored Anson with uplifted hands.

Wilson walked away.

"Boss, let Jim alone," whispered Shady. "It's orful the way you buck agin him—when you seen he's stirred up. Jim's true blue. But you gotta be careful."

When the card playing was resumed Anson did not join the game; he lay at length, his head on a saddle, scowling at the little shelter where the captive girl kept herself out of sight. At times a faint song or laugh, very unnatural, was wafted across the space. Wilson plodded at the cooking and apparently heard no sounds. Presently he called the men to eat.

Then with plate and cup he approached the little lean-to, and kneeling he put his head inside. The girl, quick-eyed and alert, had evidently seen him coming. At any rate she greeted him with a cautious smile.

"Jim, was I pretty good?" she whispered. "Miss, you was shore the finest actress I ever seen," he responded in a low voice. "But you darn near overdid it. I'm goin' to tell Anson you're sick now—poisoned or

somethin' awful. Then we'll wait till night. Dale shore will help us out."

Withdrawing his head he got up and returned to the camp fire, where Anson was waiting curiously.

"I left the grub. But she didn't touch it. Seems sort of sick to me, like she was poisoned."

"Wuss an' wuss all the time," said Anson between his teeth. "An' where's Burt? Hyar it's noon, an' he left early. He never was no woodsman. He's got lost."

"Either thet or he's run into somethin'," replied Wilson thoughtfully.

Anson doubled a huge fist and cursed deep under his breath. He flung himself down under a tree, and after a while probably fell asleep. Moze and Shady kept at their game. Wilson paced to and fro. The afternoon hours were long. At sunset the golden gloom of the glen changed to a vague thick twilight.

Wilson put a little wood on the fire and munched a biscuit. No one asked him to cook. No one made any effort to do so. One by one each man went to the pack to get some bread and meat. Then they waited as men who knew not what they waited for, yet hated and dreaded it.

Suddenly a snorting and stamping of the horses startled the men.

"Somethin' scared the hosses," said Anson, rising. "Come on!"

Moze accompanied him and they disappeared in the gloom. More tramping of hoofs was heard, then a cracking of brushing and the deep voices of men. At length the two outlaws returned, leading three of the horses, which they haltered in the open glen.

The camp-fire light showed Anson's face dark and serious.

"Jim, them hosses are wilder'n deer," he said. "I ketched mine, an' Moze got two. But the rest worked away whenever we come close. Some varmint has scared them bad. We all gotta rustle out thar quick."

Wilson rose, shaking his head doubtfully; and at that moment the quiet air split to a piercing horrid neigh of a terrified horse. Prolonged to a screech, it broke and ended. Then followed snorts of fright, pound and crack and thud of hoofs, and crash of brush; then a gathering thumping, crashing roar, split by piercing sounds.

"Stampede!" yelled Anson, and he ran to hold his own horse, which he had haltered right in camp. It was big and wild looking, and now reared and plunged to break away. Anson got there just in time, and it took all his weight to pull the horse down. Not until the crashing, snorting, pounding mêlée had subsided and died away over the rim of the glen did Anson dare leave his frightened favorite.

"Gone! Our horses are gone! Did you hear 'em?" he exclaimed blankly.

"Boss, we'll never git 'em back—not'n a hundred years," declared Moze.

"Thet settles us, Snake Anson," stridently added Shady Jones. "See what you've fetched us to!"

Night set in jet-black, dismal, lonely, without a star. Faintly the wind moaned. Weirily the brook babbled through its strange chords. The black cliff was invisible, yet seemed to have many weird faces; the giant pines loomed spectral; the shadows were thick, moving, changing. Flickering lights from the camp fire circled the huge trunks and played fantastically over the brooding men.

This camp fire did not burn or blaze cheerily; it had no glow, no sputter, no white heart, no red living embers. One by one the outlaws, as if by common consent, tried their hands at making the fire burn right. What little wood had been collected was old; it would burn up with false flare, only to die quickly.

After a while not one of the outlaws spoke or stirred. Not one smoked. Their gloomy eyes were fixed on the fire. Each one was concerned with his own thoughts, his own lonely soul, unconsciously full of a doubt of the future.

The evil they had done spoke in the voice of Nature, out of the darkness, and was interpreted by each according to his hopes and fears. Fear was their predominating sense.

It was Anson who caught the first intimation of an impending doom.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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Sugar Beet Supremacy

(Concluded from Page 13)

most advanced of truck farmers are accustomed to. Three years ago Mr. Cutler, of the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company, determined to obtain the finest pedigreed seed obtainable to start a new farm tract, and got some from Austria—no one knows how—at a cost of fifty dollars a pound.

That seed was planted by hand with the utmost care and economy. When the thinning-out time came the young plants pulled out were replanted in prepared ground. In the fall the selected mother beets were stored in pits—not being allowed to touch one another—and covered with damp soil. Day and night through the winter special employees watched the temperature, adding or taking off covering to hold the temperature positively at between thirty-five and forty degrees.

The mother beets are carefully planted in the spring and conscientiously cultivated and irrigated through the summer. In the fall the seed is hand-picked and threshed out.

The cost of all is considerably higher than the normal prices of imported seed, because of the comparatively high cost of hand labor here, but the sugar men are a unit in declaring that even though the war closed at once they would not cease in the slightest degree the work already started; they will never again place dependence upon a foreign country for supplies.

Four More Factories Planned

It has been splendid work right through, not only by the farmers but by the manufacturers; and that the determination to increase the crop enormously is backed by exhaustive preparation is shown by the fact that at least four more factories are now planned and will be built in time for the 1918 crop. And farmers all over the beet districts are preparing for more acreage.

They are encouraged in that by a fair share in the advance in the price of sugar. In 1914-15 the contracted price a ton for beets was five dollars. This year the price is fixed at eight dollars and fifty cents. Or, if the farmers prefer another rate—which very few do—it will be made seven dollars a ton for the beets delivered, and a fifty-fifty division of the manufacturers' profits, as determined by United States accounts.

The districts in which sugar beets thrive are also districts in which the potato is—or should be—a winner; but the results of the potato exploits of 1917 were disappointing to many growers. The crop was all right, but the prices—so far—have not boosted very high, and the utter confusion of transportation is causing terrific losses. This undoubtedly will cause a great acreage, usually in potatoes, to be put into beets, and consequently the sugar production will be largely increased. Almost every factory now in operation has capacity or can be equipped quickly to produce thirty to forty per cent more sugar than it is now making. The new factories being built are not for the purpose of using up any surplus of beets in the already equipped districts; they are in sections where beet sugar has never before been produced.

That the American-grown beet sugar has suddenly assumed an importance never before credited to it may be seen by a

consideration of the cane-sugar production. There has been no appreciable increase in that since the war commenced. The Southern States' crop is about 250,000 tons; the Hawaiian crop, 500,000 tons. Together these do not equal the present tonnage of beet sugar. Cuba's crop—raw sugar—runs about 3,000,000 tons, of which two-thirds usually has been received, refined and consumed in this country. Now, however, the Allies, finding their great source of sugar from Austria, Germany and Russia cut off, are looking to Cuba, and there is no reason why Cuba should not sell to those distressed nations rather than to us.

That apparently cuts down our supply of cane sugar from a normal 2,750,000 tons to the 750,000 tons from Louisiana and Hawaii, and makes beet sugar loom big.

The beet farmers saw that from the first and—coupled with the stability of culture of the crop and its freedom from the idiosyncrasies of handlers and rehandlers, speculators and manipulators—they have felt a greater interest and a greater temptation in it than any other food product they could raise. Hence the splendid increase.

The prejudice that may have existed in the past in the districts where beet sugar was manufactured, because of some defects in the machinery, the men or the process of the early days, has almost disappeared. That prejudice never has extended to the East, where the sugar has been bought as just sugar, without any question as to its origin. No difference was observed because no difference existed. Analytical tests by the most expert chemists have determined that in saccharine content and purity the beet sugar is fully equal to the cane sugar.

There is a point in connection with beet production which must not be overlooked. The by-product of the sugar factories is pulp, which in 1917 amounted, roughly, to 6,000,000 tons. The by-product of the farms is the tops and crowns, amounting to over half as much more—a total of 10,000,000 tons of excellent feed, sufficient, mixed with one-sixth its weight of alfalfa, to put 250,000,000 pounds of beef onto a million lean range feeders in about four months, without grain.

This has been shown by repeated trials, and consequently it shows that the acreage devoted to beets also is doing its part very effectively in making beef.

Retired Minister Found a Way

FROM early manhood until he was fifty-one years old, the Rev. E. McCollom, of Henderson County, Kentucky, was a Cumberland Falls Presbyterian minister. At fifty-one a chronic throat trouble caused him to leave the active ministry. So he bought a run-down farm of a hundred acres on which there were about thirty acres of apple trees, all in bad condition.

That was about twenty years ago. Now Mr. McCollom's Winesap apples are sold only to the fancy trade and always command top prices. The McCollom home has been improved and beautified and is one of the handsomest in that county. Everything about the place testifies to the success of the owner.

M. E. BACON.

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