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Painted by Katharine R. Wireman

SUCKERS, GRAZING, FARMING OR WHAT?

THE MYSTERIOUS RIDER

IX

A NEW spirit or a liberation of her own had fired Columbine and was now burning within her, unquenchable and unutterable. Some divine spark had penetrated into that mysterious depth of her, to inflame and to illumine, so that when she arose from this hour of calamity she felt that to the tenderness and sorrow and fidelity in her soul had been added the lightning flash of passion.

"Oh, Ben—shall I be able to hold on to this?" she cried, flinging wide her arms, as if to embrace the winds of heaven.

"This what, lass?" he asked.

"This—this woman!" she answered passionately, with her hands sweeping back to press her breast.

"No woman who wakes ever goes back to a girl again," he said sadly.

"I wanted to die—and now I want to live—to fight. . . . Ben, you've uplifted me. I was little, weak, miserable. . . . But in my dreams or in some state I can't remember or understand I've waited for your very words. I was ready. It's as if I knew you in some other world, before I was born on this earth; and when you spoke to me here so wonderfully—as my mother might have spoken—my heart leaped up in recognition of you and your call to my womanhood! . . . Oh, how strange and beautiful!"

"Miss Collie," he replied slowly, as he bent to his saddle straps, "you're young an' you've no understandin' of what's strange an' terrible in life. An' beautiful, too, as you say. . . . Who knows? Maybe in some former state I was somethin' to you. I believe in that. Reckon I can't say how or what. Maybe we were flowers or birds. I've a weakness for that idea."

"Birds! I like the thought too," replied Columbine. "I love most birds. But there are hawks, crows, buzzards!"

"I reckon. Lass, there's got to be balance in Nature. If it weren't for the ugly an' the evil we wouldn't know the beautiful an' good. . . . An' now let's ride home. It's gettin' late."

"Ben, ought I not go back to Wilson—right now?" she asked slowly.

"What for?"

"To tell him—something—and why I can't come to-morrow or ever afterward," she replied low and tremulously.

Wade pondered over her words. It seemed to Columbine that her sharpened faculties sensed something of hostility, of opposition in him.

"Reckon to-morrow would be better," he said presently. "Wilson's had enough excitement for one day."

"Then I'll go to-morrow," she returned.

In the gathering cold twilight they rode down the trail in silence.

"Good night, lass," said Wade as he reached his cabin. "An' remember you're not alone any more."

"Good night, my friend," she replied, and rode on.

Columbine encountered Montana Jim at the corral and it was not too dark for her to see his foam-lashed horse. Jim appeared noncommittal, almost surly. But Columbine guessed that he had ridden to Kremmling and back in one day, on some order of Jack's.

"Miss Collie, I'll tend to Pronto," he offered. "An' yore supper'll be waitin'."

A bright fire blazed on the living-room hearth. The rancher was reading by its light.

"Hello, Rosy-cheeks," greeted the rancher with unusual amiability. "Been ridin' agin the wind, hey? Wal, if you ain't pretty then my eyes are pore!"

"It's cold, dad," she replied, "and the wind stings. But I didn't ride fast nor far. . . . I've been up to see Wilson Moore."

"Ahuh! Wal, how's the boy?" asked Bellhounds gruffly.

"He said he was all right but—but I guess that's not so," responded Columbine.

"Any friends lookin' after him?"

"Oh, yes—he must have friends—the Andrews, and others. I'm glad to say his cabin is comfortable. He'll be looked after."

"Wal, I'm glad to hear that. I'll send Lem or Wade up thar an' see if we can do anythin' fer the boy."

"Dad—that's just like you," replied Columbine, with her hand seeking his broad shoulder.

"Ahuh! Say, Collie, hyar's letters from most everybody in Kremmlin' wantin' to be invited up fer October first. How about askin' 'em?"

"The more the merrier," she replied.

By Zane Grey

Author of "Wildfire," "The Desert of Wheat," "Riders of the Purple Sage," Etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK B. HOFFMAN

Bygolly, lass—I'd never believed that was in you," he cried. . . . "Jack, be game an' take your medicine. . . . An' both of you forgive an' forget. Thar'll be quarrels enough mebbe, without rakin' over the past."

When alone again, Columbine reverted to a mood vastly removed from her

perilous in its sweetness. That only did she fear to realize and to face, because it was an unknown factor, a threatening flame. Her sudden knowledge of it seemed inextricably merged with the mounting, strong and steadfast stream of her spirit.

"I'll go to him. I'll tell him," she murmured. "He shall have that! . . . Then I must bid him—good-by—forever!"

To tell Wilson would be sweet; to leave him would be bitter. Vague possibilities haunted her. What might come of the telling? How dark loomed the bitterness! She could not know what hid in either of these acts until they were fulfilled. And the hours became long and sleep far off, and the quietness of the house a torment, and the melancholy wail of coyotes a reminder of happy girlhood never to return.

When next day the long-deferred hour came Columbine selected a horse that she could run and she rode up the winding valley swift as the wind. But at the aspen grove, where Wade's keen gentle voice had given her secret life, she suffered a reaction that made her halt and ascend the slope very slowly and with many stops.

Sight of Wade's horse halted near the cabin relieved Columbine somewhat of a gathering might of emotion. The hunter would be inside and so she would not be compelled at once to confess her secret. This expectancy gave impetus to her lagging steps. Before she reached the open door she called out a greeting.

"Collie, you're late," answered Wilson with both joy and reproach as she entered. The cowboy lay upon his bed and he was alone in the room.

"Oh! . . . Where is Ben?" exclaimed Columbine.

"He was here. He cooked my dinner. We waited, but you never came. The dinner got cold. I made sure you'd backed out—weren't coming at all—and I couldn't eat. . . . Wade said he knew you'd come. He went off with the hounds somewhere. . . . and oh, Collie, it's all right now!"

Columbine walked to his bedside and looked down upon him with a feeling as if some giant hand was tugging at her heart. He looked better. The swelling and redness of his face were less marked. And at that moment no pain shadowed his eyes. They were soft, dark, eloquent. If Columbine had not come with her avowed resolution and desire to unburden her heart she would have found that look in his eyes a desperately hard one to resist. Had it ever shone there before? Blind she had been.

"You're better," she said happily.

"Sure—now. But I had a bad night. Didn't sleep till near daylight. Wade found me asleep. . . . Collie, it's good of you to come. You look so—so wonderful! I never saw your face glow like that. And your eyes—oh!"

"You think I'm pretty, then?" she asked dreamily, not occupied at that thought.

He uttered a contemptuous laugh.

"Come closer," he said, reaching for her with a clumsy bandaged hand.

Down upon her knees Columbine fell. Both hands flew to cover her face. And as she swayed forward she shook violently and there escaped her lips a little muffled sound.

"Why—Collie!" cried Moore, astounded. "Don't cry! I—I didn't mean anything. I only wanted to feel you—touch your hand."

"Here," she answered, blindly holding out her hand, groping for his till she found it. Her other was still pressed to her eyes. One moment longer would Columbine keep her secret—hide her eyes—revel in the unutterable joy and sadness of this crisis that could come to a woman only once.

"What in the world?" ejaculated the cowboy, now bewildered. But he possessed himself of the trembling hand offered. "Collie, you act so strange. . . . You're not crying! . . . Am I only locoed

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"I'll Tell Him," She
Murmured. "He Shall
Have That! . . .
Then I Must Bid Him—
Good-by—Forever!"

"Wal, I reckon I'll not ask anybody."

"Why not, dad?"

"No one can gamble on that son of mine, even on his weddin' day," replied Bellhounds gloomily.

"Dad, what'd Jack do to-day?"

"I'm not sayin' he did anythin'," answered the rancher.

"Dad, you can gamble on me."

"Wal, I should smile," he said, putting his big arm round her. "I wish you was Jack an' Jack was you."

At that moment the young man spoken of slouched into the room with his head bandaged, and took a seat at the supper-table.

"Wal, Collie, let's go an' get it," said the rancher cheerily. "I can always eat anyhow."

"I'm hungry as a bear," rejoined Columbine as she took her seat, which was opposite Jack.

"Where've you been?" he asked curiously.

"Why, good evening, Jack. [Did you finally notice me? . . . I've been riding Pronto, the first time since he was hurt. Had a lovely ride—up through Sage Valley.]"

Jack glowered at her with the one unbandaged eye and growled something under his breath, and then began to stab meat and potatoes with his fork.

"What's the matter, Jack? Aren't you well?" asked Columbine with a solicitude just a little too sweet to be genuine.

"Yes, I'm well," snapped Jack.

"But you look sick. That is, what I can see of you looks sick. Your mouth droops at the corners. You're very pale—and red in spots. And your one eye glows with unearthly woe, as if you were not long for this world!"

The amazing nature of this speech, coming from the girl who had always been so sweet and quiet and backward, was attested to by the consternation of Jack and the mirth of his father.

"Are you making fun of me?" demanded Jack.

"Why, Jack! Do you think I would make fun of you? I only wanted to say how queer you look. . . . Are you going to be married with one eye?"

Jack collapsed at that, and the old man after a long stare of open-mouthed wonder broke out: "Haw! Haw! Haw! . . .

apparent levity with the rancher and his son. A grave and inward-searching thought possessed her, and it had to do with the uplift, the spiritual advance, the rise above mere personal welfare that had strangely come to her through Bent Wade. From their first meeting he had possessed a singular attraction for her, that now, in the light of the meaning of his life, seemed to Columbine to be the man's nobility and wisdom, arising out of his travail, out of the terrible years that had left their record upon his face. And so Columbine strove to bind forever in her soul the spirit which had arisen in her, interpreting from Wade's rude words of philosophy that which she needed for her own light and strength.

She appreciated her duty toward the man who had been a father to her. Whatever he asked, that would she do. And as for the son she must live with the rest of her life, her duty there was to be a good wife, to bear with his faults, to strive always to help him by kindness, patience, loyalty and such affection as was possible to her. Hate had to be reckoned with, and hate, she knew, had no place in a good woman's heart. It must be expelled, if that were humanly possible. All this was hard, would grow harder, but she accepted it and knew her mind.

Her soul was her own, unchangeable through any adversity. She could be with that alone always, aloof from the petty cares and troubles common to people. Wade's words had thrilled her with their secret, with their limitless hope of an unknown world of thought and feeling. Happiness, in the ordinary sense, might never be hers—alas, for her dreams—but there had been given her a glimpse of something higher than pleasure and contentment. Dreams were but dreams. But she could still dream of what had been, of what might have been, of the beauty and mystery of life, of something in Nature that called sweetly and irresistibly to her. Who could rob her of the rolling gray velvety hills and the purple peaks and the black ranges, among which she had been found a wail, a little lost creature, born like a columbine under the spruces?

Love, sudden-dawning inexplicable love, was her secret, still tremulously new, and

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or flighty or what? Dear, look at me." Columbine swept her hand from her eyes with a gesture of utter surrender.

"Wilson, I'm ashamed—and sad—and gloriously happy," she said with swift breathlessness.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because of—of something I have to tell you," she whispered.

"What is that?"

She bent over him.

"Can't you guess?"

He turned pale and his eyes burned with intense fire.

"I won't guess. . . . I daren't guess."

"It's something that's been true for years—forever it seems—something I never dreamed of till last night," she went on softly.

"Collie!" he cried. "Don't torture me!"

"Do you remember long ago—when we quarreled so dreadfully—because you kissed me?" she asked.

"Do you think I could kiss you—and live to forget?"

"I love you!" she whispered shyly, feeling the hot blood burn her.

That whisper transformed Wilson Moore. His arm flashed round her neck and pulled her face down to his, and holding her in a close embrace he kissed her lips and cheeks and wet eyes, and then again her lips, passionately and tenderly.

Then he pressed her head down upon his breast.

"I can't believe! Say it again!" he cried, hoarsely.

Columbine buried her flaming face in the blanket covering him and her hands clutched it tightly. The wildness of his joy, the strange strength and power of his kisses utterly changed her. Upon his breast she lay without desire to lift her face. All seemed different, wilder as she responded to his appeal: "Yes I love you! Oh, I love—love—love you!"

"Dearest! . . . Lift your face. It's true now. I know. It's proved. . . . But let me look at you."

Columbine lifted herself as best she could. But she was blinded by tears and choked with utterance that would not come; and in the grip of a shuddering emotion that was realization of loss in a moment when she learned the supreme and imperious sweetness of love.

"Kiss me, Columbine," he demanded.

Through blurred eyes she saw his face, white and rapt, and she bent to it, meeting his lips with her first kiss, which was her last.

"Again Collie—again!" he begged.

"No—no more," she whispered very low, and encircling his neck with her arms she hid her face and held him convulsively, and stifled the sobs that shook her.

Then Moore was silent, holding her with his free hand, breathing hard, and slowly quieting down. Columbine felt then that he knew that there was something terribly wrong, and that perhaps he dared not voice his fear. At any rate he silently held her, waiting. That silent wait grew unendurable for Columbine. She wanted to prolong this moment that was to be all she could ever surrender. But she dared not do so, for she knew if he ever kissed her again her duty to Belllounds would vanish like mist in the sun.

To release her hold upon him seemed like a tearing of her heart strings. She sat up, she wiped the tears from her eyes, she rose to her feet, all the time striving for strength to face him again.

A loud voice ringing from the cliffs outside startled Columbine. It came from Wade calling the hounds. He had returned and the fact stirred her.

"I'm to marry Jack Belllounds on October first."

The cowboy raised himself up as far as he was able. It was agonizing for Columbine to watch the changing and whitening of his face!

"No—no!" he gasped.

"Yes, it's true," she replied hopelessly.

"No!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"But, Wilson, I tell you yes. I came to tell you. It's true—oh, it's true!"

"But, girl, you said you love me," he declared, transfixing her with dark accusing eyes.

"That's just as terribly true."

He softened a little, and something of terror and horror took the place of anger.

Just then Wade entered the cabin with his soft tread, hesitated, and then came to Columbine's side. She could not unrivet her gaze from Moore to look at her friend, but she reached out with trembling hand to him. Wade clasped it in a horny palm.

Wilson fought for self-control in vain.

"Collie, if you love me how can you marry Jack Belllounds?" he demanded.

"I must."

"Why must you?"

"I owe my life and my bringing up to his father. He wants me to do it. His heart is set upon my helping Jack to become a man. . . . Dad loves me and I love him. I must stand by him. I must repay him. It is my duty."

"You've a duty to yourself—as a woman!" he rejoined passionately. "Belllounds is wrapped up in his son. He's blind to the shame of such a marriage. But you're not."

"Shame," faltered Columbine.

"Yes. The shame of marrying one man when you love another. You can't love two men. . . . You'll give yourself. You'll be his wife! Do you understand what that means?"

"I—I think—I do," replied Columbine faintly. Where had vanished all her wonderful spirit? This fire-eyed boy was breaking her heart with his reproach.

"Dearest Collie, think!" he implored wildly. "You won't ruin yourself! You won't? Say you won't!"

"But, Wilson, what can I say? I've got to marry him."

"Collie, I'll kill him before he gets you."

"You mustn't talk so. If you fought again—if anything terrible happened, it'd kill me."

"You'd be better off!" he flashed, white as a sheet.

I am horribly jealous. But I know him. He's not worth you! No man is—and he the least. He'll break your heart, drag you down, ruin your health—kill you as sure as you stand there. I want you to know I could prove to you what he is. But don't make me. Trust me, Collie. Believe me."

"Wilson, I do believe you," cried Columbine. "But it doesn't make any difference. It only makes my duty harder."

"He'll treat you like he treats a horse or a dog. He'll beat you—"

"He never will! If he ever lays a hand on me—"

"If not that he'll tire of you. Jack Belllounds never stuck to anything in his life and never will. It's not in him. He wants what he can't have. If he gets it then right off he doesn't want it. Oh, I've known him since he was a kid. . . . Columbine, you've a mistaken sense of duty. No girl need sacrifice her all because some man found her a lost baby and gave her a home. A woman owes more to herself than to anyone."

"Oh, that's true, Wilson. I've thought it all. . . . But you're unjust—hard. You make no allowance for—some possible good in everyone. Dad swears I can reform Jack. Maybe I can. I'll pray for it."

"Reform Jack Belllounds! How can you save a bad egg? That coward! Didn't he prove to you what he was when he jumped on me and kicked my broken foot till I fainted? . . . What do you want?"

"Don't say any more—please," cried Columbine. "Oh, I'm so sorry. . . . I oughtn't have come. . . . Ben, take me home."

"But Collie, I love you," frantically urged Wilson. "And he—he may love you—but he's—Collie—he's been—"

Here Moore seemed to bite his tongue, to hold back speech, to fight something terrible and cowardly in himself.

Columbine heard only his impassioned declaration of love, and to that she vibrated.

"You speak as if this was one-sided," she burst out, as once more the gush of

leave here. If she hadn't told me she loved me then I might have stood anything. But now I can't. It'll kill me, Wade."

"Boy, you're talkin' flighty again," replied Wade. "This mornin' when I come you were dreamin' an' talkin'—clean out of your head. . . . Well, now, you an' Collie listen. You're right an' she's right. I reckon I never run across a deal with two people fixed just like you. But that doesn't hinder me from feelin' the same about it as I'd feel about somethin' I was used to."

He paused, and gently releasing Columbine, he went to Moore, retied his loosened bandage and spread out the disarranged blankets. Then he sat down on the edge of the bed and bent over a little, running a roughened hand through the scant hair that had begun to silver upon his head. Presently he looked up, and from that fallow face, with its lines and furrows, and from the deep inscrutable eyes, there fell a light which, however sad and wise in its infinite understanding of pain and strife, was still ruthless and unquenchable in its hope.

"Wade, save Columbine!" importuned Wilson.

"Oh, if you only could!" cried Columbine, impelled beyond her power to resist by that prayer.

"Lass, you stand by your convictions," he said impressively. "An' Moore, you be a man an' don't make it so hard for her. Neither of you can do anythin'. . . . Now, there's old Belllounds—he'll never change. He might rare up for this or that, but he'll never change his cherished hopes for his son. . . . But Jack might change! Lookin' back over all the years I remember many boys like this Buster Jack, an' I remember how in the nature of their doin's they just hanged themselves. I've a queer foresight about people whose trouble I've made my own. It's somethin' that never fails. When their trouble's goin' to turn out bad then I feel a terrible yearnin' to tell the story of Hell-Bent Wade. That foresight of trouble gave me my name. . . . But it's not operatin' here. . . . An' so, my young friends, you can believe me when I say somethin' will happen. As far as October first is concerned or any time near, Collie isn't goin' to marry Jack Belllounds."

X

ONE day Wade remarked to Belllounds: "You can never tell what a dog is until you know him. Dogs are like men. Some of 'em look good, but they're really bad. An' that works the other way round. If a dog's born to run wild an' be a sheep killer that's what he'll be. I've known dogs that loved men as no humans could have loved them. It doesn't make any difference to a dog if his master is a worthless scamp."

"Wal, I reckon most of them hounds I bought had no-good masters, judgin' from the way they act," replied the rancher.

"I'm developin' a first-rate pack," said Wade. "Jim hasn't any faults, exceptin' he doesn't bay enough. Samson's not as true-nosed as Jim, but he'll follow Jim, an' he has a deep heavy bay you can hear for miles. So that makes up for Jim's one fault. These two hounds hang together, an' with them I'm developin' others. Denver will split off of bear or lion tracks when he jumps a deer. I reckon he's not young enough to be cured of that. Some of the younger hounds are comin' on fine. But there's two dogs in the bunch that beat me all hollow."

"Which ones?" asked Belllounds. "There's that bloodhound, Kane," replied the hunter. "He's sure a queer dog. I can't win him. He minds me now, because I licked him once good an' hard when he bit me. . . . But he doesn't cotton to me. He's gettin' fond of Miss Columbine, an' might make a good watchdog for her. Where'd he come from?"

"Wal, if I don't disremember he was born in a prairie schooner, comin' across

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"I'm Beginn'n to Feel That I Couldn't Let Her Marry That Buster Jack," Soliloquized Wade as He Rode Along the Grassy Trail

Columbine leaned against Wade for support. She was fast weakening in strength, although her spirit held. She knew what was inevitable. But Wilson's agony was rending her.

"Listen," began the cowboy again. "It's your life—your happiness—your soul. . . . Belllounds is crazy over that spoiled boy. He thinks the sun rises and sets in him. . . . But Jack Belllounds is no good on this earth! . . . Collie, dearest, don't think that's my jealousy.

hot blood surged over her. "You don't love me any more than I love you. Not so much, for I'm a woman! . . . I love you with all my heart and soul!"

Moore fell back upon the bed, spent and overcome.

"Wade, my friend, do something," he whispered, appealing to the hunter as if in a last hope. "Tell Collie what it'll mean for her to marry Belllounds. If that doesn't change her then tell her what it'll mean to me. I'll never go home. I'll never

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the plains. His mother was a full-blood an' come from Louisiana."

"That accounts for an instinct I see croppin' out in Kane," rejoined Wade. "He likes to trail a man. I've caught him doin' it. An' he doesn't take to huntin' lions or bear. Why, the other day when the hounds treed a lion an' went howlin' wild, Kane came up an' he looked disgusted an' went off by himself. He hunts by himself anyhow. First off I thought he might be a sheep killer. But I reckon not. He can trail men, an' that's about all the good he is. His mother must have been a slave hunter."

"Ahuh! Wal, train him on trailin' men, then. I've seen times when a dog like thet'd come handy. An' if he takes to Collie an' you approve of him, let her have him. She's been coaxin' me fer a dog."

"That isn't a bad idea. Miss Collie walks an' rides alone a good deal, an' she never packs a gun."

"Funny about thet," said Bellounds. "Collie is game in most ways, but she'd never kill anythin' . . . Wade, you ain't thinkin' she ought to stop them lone-some walks an' rides?"

"No, sure not, so long as she doesn't go too far away."

"Ahuh! Wal, supposin' she rode up out of the valley, west on the Black Range?"

"That won't do, Bellounds," replied Wade seriously. "But Miss Collie's not goin' to, for I've cautioned her. Fact is, I've run across some hard-lookin' men between here an' Buffalo Park. They're not hunters or prospectors or cattlemen or travelers."

"Wal, you don't say?" rejoined Bellounds. "You don't reckon them strangers will winter in the woods?"

"No, I don't. Neither does Lewis. You recollect him?"

"Yes, thet prospector who hangs out round Buffalo Park, lookin' fer gold. Good fellar, but crazy on gold."

"I've met Lewis several times one place and another. I lost the hounds day before yesterday. They treed a lion an' Lewis heard the racket, an' he stayed with them till I come up. Then he told me some interestin' news. You see he's been worryin' about this gang thet's rangin' round Buffalo Park, an' he's tried to get a line on them. Somebody took a shot at him in the woods. He couldn't swear it was one of that outfit, but he could swear he wasn't near shot by accident. Now, Lewis says these men pack to an' from Elgeria, an' he has a hunch they're in cahoots with Smith, who runs a place there. You know Smith?"

"No, I don't, an' haven't any wish to," declared Bellounds shortly. "He always looked shady to me. An' he's not been square with friends of mine in Elgeria. But no one ever proved him crooked, whatever was thought. Fer my part I never missed a guess in my life. Men don't have scars on their face like his fer nothin'."

"Boss, I'm confidin' what I want kept under your hat," said Wade quietly. "I knew Smith. He's as bad as the West makes them. I gave him that scar. . . . An' when he sees me he's goin' for his gun."

"Wal, I'll be darned. Doesn't surprise me. It's a small world. . . . Wade, I'll keep my mouth shut, sure. But what's your game?"

"Lewis an' I will find out if there is any connection between Smith an' this gang of strangers—an' the occasional loss of a few head of stock."

"Wade, you ain't agoin' to start thet tellin' hell-bent happenin's to come hyar at White Slides?" interrupted Bellounds plaintively.

"No, I reckon I've no hunch like that now," responded Wade seriously. "But I was about to say that if Smith is in on any rustlin' of cattle he'll be hard to catch, an' if he's caught there'll be shootin' to pay. He's cunnin' an' has had long experience. It's not likely he'd work openly, as he did years ago. If he's stealin' stock or buyin' an' sellin' stock that someone steals for him, it's only on a small scale, an' it'll be hard to trace."

"Wal, he might be deep," said Bellounds reflectively. "But men like thet, no matter how deep or cunnin' they are, always come to a bad end. Jest works out natural. . . . Had you any grudge agin Smith?"

"What I give him was for somebody else, an' was sure little enough. He's got the grudge against me."

"Ahuh! Wal, then, don't you go huntin' fer trouble. Try an' make White Slides one place thet'll disprove your name. All the same, don't shy at sight of anythin' suspicious round the ranch."

The old man plodded thoughtfully away.

"He's gettin' a hunch that I'll tell him of some shadow hoverin' black over White Slides," soliloquized Wade. "Maybe—maybe so. But I don't see any yet. . . . Strange, how a man will say what he didn't start out to say. Now I started to tell him about that amazin' dog, Fox."

Fox was the great dog of the whole pack, and he had been absolutely overlooked, which fact Wade regarded with contempt for himself. Discovery of this particular dog came about by accident. Somewhere in the big corral there was a hole where the smaller dogs could escape, but Wade had been unable to find it.

One day when the hunter, very much exasperated, was prowling round and round inside the corral, searching for this mysterious vent, a rather small dog with short gray-and-brown woolly hair, and shaggy brows half hiding big bright eyes, came up wagging his stump of a tail.

"Well, what do you know about it?" demanded Wade. "Say, maybe I overlooked somethin'? But there's been a heap of dogs round here an' you're no great shucks for looks. Now if you're talkin' to me come an' find that hole."

Presently when Wade came to a rough place the dog slipped under a shelving rock and thence through a half-concealed hole in the fence; and immediately came back through to wag his stump of a tail and look as if the finding of that hole was easy enough.

"You old fox," declared Wade, very much pleased as he patted the dog. "You found it for me, didn't you? Good dog! Now I'll fix that hole an' then you can come to the cabin with me. An' your name's Fox."

That was how Fox introduced himself to Wade and found his opportunity. The fact that he was not a hound had operated against his being taken out hunting, and therefore little or no attention had been paid him. Very shortly Fox showed himself to be a dog of superior intelligence.

Fox insisted so strongly on being taken out to hunt with the hounds that Wade, vowing not to be surprised at anything, let him go. It happened to be a particularly hard day on hounds, because of old tracks and cross tracks and difficult ground. Fox worked out a labyrinthine trail that Samson gave up and Jim failed on. This delighted Wade, and that night he tried to find out from Andrews, who sold the dog to Bellounds, something about Fox. All the information obtainable was that Andrews suspected the fellow from whom he had gotten Fox had stolen him.

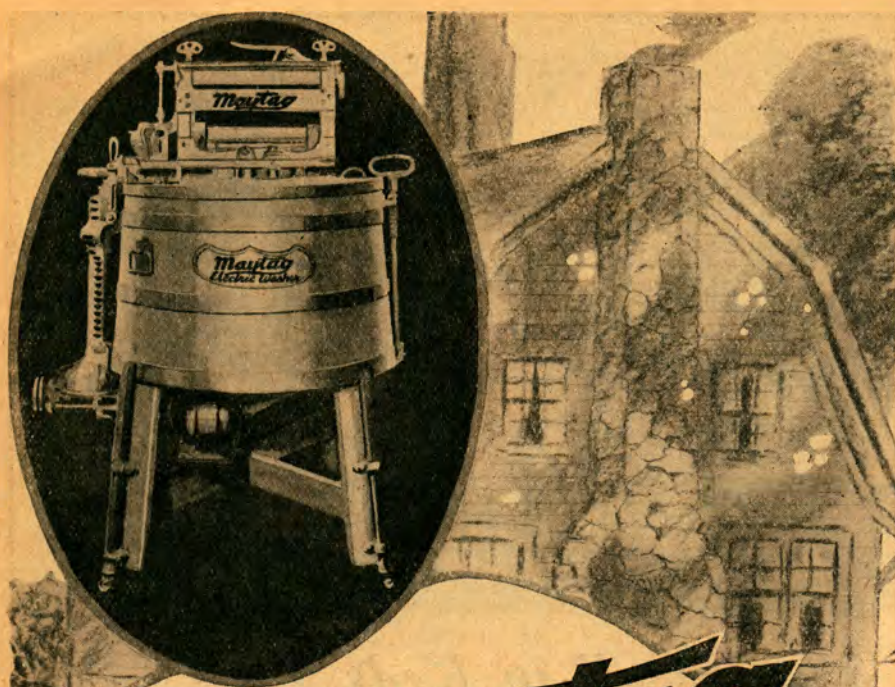
Long before the end of that week Wade loved Fox and decided that he was a wonderful animal. Fox liked to hunt, but it did not matter what he hunted. That depended upon the pleasure of his master. He would find hobbled horses that were hiding out and standing still to escape detection. He would trail cattle. He would tree squirrels and point grouse.

Bear and cat tracks, however, roused the savage instinct in him, and transformed him. He yelped at every jump on a trail, and whenever his yelp became piercing and continuous Wade well knew the quarry was in sight. He fought bear like a wise old dog that knew when to rush in with a snap and when to keep away. When lions or wildcats were treed Fox lost much of his ferocity and interest. His most valuable characteristic, however, was his ability to stick on the track upon which he was put.

Fox and Kane, it seemed to the hunter in his reflective foreshadowing of events at White Slides, were destined to play most important parts.

Upon a certain morning, several days before October first, which date rankled in the mind of Wade, he left Moore's cabin leading a packhorse. The hounds he had left behind at the ranch, but Fox accompanied him.

"Wade, I want some elk steak," old Bellounds had said the day before.



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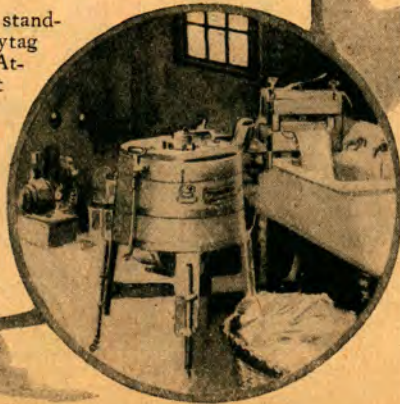
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"I haven't run across any bulls lately," Wade had replied, but he did not mention that he had avoided such a circumstance. The fact was Wade admired and loved the elk above all horned wild animals. So strange was his attitude toward elk that he had gone meat-hungry many a time with these great stags bugling near his camp.

As he climbed the yellow grassy mountain side, working round above the valley, his mind was not centered on the task at hand, but on Wilson Moore, who had come to rely on him with the unconscious tenacity of a son whose faith in his father was unshakable. The crippled cowboy kept his hope, kept his cheerful, grateful spirit, obeyed and suffered with a patience that was fine. There had been no improvement in his injured foot.

The thing that mostly occupied the cowboy was the near approach of October first with its terrible possibility for him. He did not talk about it, except when fever made him irrational, but it was plain to Wade how he prayed and hoped and waited in silence. Strange how he trusted Wade to avert catastrophe of Columbine's marriage! Yet such trust seemed familiar to Wade, as he reflected over past years. Had he not wanted such trust—had he not invited it?

There were personal dread and poignant pain for Wade in Columbine Belllound's situation. After all, he had only his subtle and intuitive assurance that matters would turn out well for her in the end. To trust that now, when the shadow began to creep over his own daughter, seemed unwise—a hazardous and imprudent juggling with chance.

"I'm beginnin' to feel that I couldn't let her marry that Buster Jack," soliloquized Wade as he rode along the grassy trail. "Fust off, seein' how strong was her sense of duty an' loyalty, I wasn't so set against it. But somethin's growin' in me. Her love for that crippled boy, now, an' his for her! Lord, they're so young an' life must be so hot an' love so sweet! I reckon that's why I couldn't let her marry Jack. . . . But on the other hand, there's the old man's faith in his son, an' there's Collie's faith in herself an' in life. Now I believe in that. An' the years have proved to me there's hope for the worst of men. . . . I haven't even had a talk with this Buster Jack. I don't know him except by hearsay. An' I'm sure prejudiced, which's no wonder, considerin' where I saw him in Denver. . . . I reckon, before I go any further, I'd better meet this Belllounds boy an' see what's in him."

It was characteristic of Wade that this soliloquy abruptly ended his thoughtful considerations for the time being. This was owing to the fact that he rested upon a decision, and also because it was time he began to attend to the object of his climb. Bench after bench he had ascended, and the higher he got the denser and more numerous became the aspen thickets and the more luxuriant the grass. Presently the long black slope of spruce confronted him, with its edge like a dark wall.

Wade headed to the left, avoiding rough rocky defiles of weathered cliff and wind-fallen trees, and aimed to find easy going up to the summit of the mountain bluff. A brightening of the dark-green gloom ahead showed the hunter that he was approaching a large glade or open patch, where the sunlight fell strongly. It turned out to be a swale or swampy place some few acres in extent and directly at the foot of a last steep wooded slope. Here Fox put his nose into the air and halted.

"What're you scentin', Fox, old boy?" asked Wade with low voice as he peered ahead. The wind was in the wrong direction for him to approach close to game

without being detected. Fox wagged his stumpy tail and looked up with knowing eyes. Wade proceeded cautiously. The swamp was a rank growth of long weedy grasses and ferns, with here and there a green-mossed bog half hidden, and a number of dwarf oak trees. Wade's horse sank up to his knees in the mire. On the other side showed fresh tracks.

"It's elk, all right," said Wade as he dismounted. "Heard us comin'. Now, Fox, stick your nose in that track. An' go slow."

With rifle ready Wade began the ascent of the slope on foot, leading his horse. An old elk trail showed a fresh track. Fox accommodated his pace to that of the toiling hunter. The ascent was steep and led up through dense forest. At intervals, when Wade halted to catch his breath and listen, he heard faint snapping of dead branches far above. At length he reached the top of the mountain, to find a wide open space, with heavy forest in front, and a bare ghastly burnt-over district to his right. Fox growled and appeared about to dash forward. Then, in an opening through the forest, Wade espied a large bull elk, standing at gaze, evidently watching him. He was a gray old bull with broken antlers. Wade made no move to shoot and the elk walked out of sight.

"Too old an' tough, Fox," explained the hunter to the anxious dog. But perhaps that was not all Wade's motive in sparing him.

Once more mounted, Wade turned his attention to the burnt district. It was a dreary hideous splotch, a blackened slash in the green cover of the mountain.

Wade found patches of grass where it was quite evident that beds had been recently occupied.

"Mountain sheep, by cracky!" exclaimed the hunter. "An' fresh tracks, too! . . . Now I wonder if it wouldn't do to kill a sheep an' tell Belllounds I couldn't find any elk."

He rode on, keen gaze shifting everywhere to catch a movement of something in this wilderness before him. If there was any living animal in sight it did not move. Wade crossed the hollow, wended a circuitous route through the upstanding forest of dead timber, and entered a thick woods that skirted the rim of the mountain. Presently he came out upon the open rim, from which the depths of green and gray yawned mightily.

Wade found fresh sheep tracks in the yellow clay of the rim, small as little deer tracks, showing that they had just been made by ewes and lambs. Not a ram track in the group!

"Well, that lets me out," said Wade as he peered under the bluff for sight of the sheep. They had gone over the steep rim as if they had wings. "Beats time how sheep can go down without fallin'! An' how they can hide!"

He knew they were near at hand and he wasted time peering to spy them out. Nevertheless, he could not locate them. Fox waited impatiently for the word to let him prove how easily he could rout them out, but this permission was not forthcoming.

"We're huntin' elk, you Jack-of-all-dogs," reprovingly spoke the hunter to Fox.

So they went on round the rim, and after a couple of miles of travel came to more forest and then to open heads of hollows that widened and deepened down. Here was excellent pasture and cover for elk. Wade left the rim to ride down these slow-descending half-open ridges, where cedars grew and jackpines stood in clumps and little brooks babbled between.

The grass grew thickly and luxuriantly and showed signs of recent grazing. Elk had been along the brook that morning.



The COFFEE House is coming back

The Coffee House, in the good old days, was the rendezvous of congenial spirits. Noted for quaintness and picturesqueness, it was here the master minds of the age were wont to foregather and sharpen the wit with merry quip and jest, to weigh matters of great moment; and give one to another, "something craggy to break the mind upon."

THE tendency of the time is toward the revival of the good old-fashioned Coffee House—where men may meet and mingle with the freedom of a club. And chat, and be sociable, and toast their friends to their hearts' content in the modern "cup that cheers but does not inebriate."

A delightful old custom is coming back—and we shall all be better for it! Good coffee is man's drink. It is cheering and soothing. It humors his whims and moods. It appeals to his better self and inspires his better nature. Good coffee is conducive to good humor, good temper, good health, good fellowship and—good citizenship.

Coffee is a civilizer—a stabilizer. In the councils of state, at the banquets of the great, in the conferences of men of affairs—wherever mighty matters portend and calm, matured judgment is required—there you will find coffee.

Who may say how much of the work of the world is aided and abetted by the cup of good coffee? In America it is the great universal drink, the common heritage of rich and poor, of great and small. We may all have coffee. Nobody need be without it—we may get it everywhere.

So long as the world lasts, we shall have coffee. It is one of nature's greatest gifts. "To know it is to love it."

Coffee—the American drink

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Benjamin Franklin, advising a young man, said: "Keep an exact account for some time, both to your expenses and your income. If you take the pains at first to mention particulars, it will have this good effect: you will discover how wonderfully small, trifling expenses mount up into large sums, and will discern what might have been and may for the future be saved without occasioning any great inconvenience."

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There were many tracks, like cowtracks, only smaller, deeper and more oval; and there were beds where elk had lain, and torn-up places where bulls had plowed and stamped with heavy hoofs.

Fox trailed the herd to higher ground, where evidently they had entered the woods. Here Wade tied his horses, and, whispering to Fox, he proceeded stealthily through this strip of spruce. He came out to an open point, taking care, however, to keep well screened, from which he had a glimpse of a parklike hollow, grassy and watered. Working round to better vantage he soon espied what had made Fox stand so stiff and bristling. A herd of elk were trooping up the opposite slope, scarcely a hundred yards distant. They had heard or scented him, but did not appear alarmed. They halted to look back. The hunter's quick estimate credited nearly two dozen to the herd, mostly cows. A magnificent bull with wide-spreading antlers and black head and shoulders and gray hind-quarters stalked out from the herd and stood an instant, head aloft, splendidly significant of the wild. Then he trotted into the woods, his antlers noiselessly spreading the green. Others trotted off likewise. Wade raised his rifle and looked through the sight at the bull and let him pass. Then he saw another over his rifle, and another. Reluctant and forced he at last aimed and pulled trigger. The heavy Henry boomed out in the stillness. Fox dashed down with eager barks. When the smoke cleared away Wade saw the opposite slope bare except for one fallen elk.

Then he returned to his horses, and brought them back to where Fox perched beside the dead quarry.

"Well, Fox, that stag'll never bugle any more of a sunrise," said Wade. "Strange, how we're made so we have to eat meat! I'd a-liked it otherwise."

He cut up the elk and packed all the meat the horse could carry, and hung the best of what was left out of the reach of coyotes. Mounting once more he ascended to the rim and found a slope leading down to the west.

At length he came to a trail he had himself made, which he now proceeded to follow. It led out of the basin, through burnt and boggy ground, and down upon the forest slope, thence to the grassy and aspened uplands. One aspen grove, where he had rested before, faced the west, and for reasons hard to guess had suffered little from frost. All the leaves were intact, some still green, but most of them a glorious gold against the blue. Here he dismounted and sat against an aspen tree.

Nature in her strange prodigality had outdone herself here. Pale white the aspen trees shone, and above was the fluttering, quivering canopy of gold tinged with green, and below clustered the asters, thick as stars in the sky.

Wade lingered, his senses predominating. This was one of those moments that colored his lonely wanderings. Only to see was enough. He would have shut out the encroaching thoughts of self, of others, of life, had that been wholly possible. But here after the first few moments of exquisite riot of his senses, where fragrance of grass and blossom filled the air and blaze of gold canopied the purple, he began to think how beautiful the earth was, how Nature hid her rarest gifts for those who loved her most, how good it was to live, if only for these blessings. And sadness crept into his meditations, because all this beauty was ephemeral, all the gold would soon be gone, and the asters, so pale and pure and purple, would soon be like the glory of a dream that had passed.

Yet still followed the saving thought that frost and winter must again yield to sun, and spring, summer, autumn would return with the flowers of their season, in that perennial birth so gracious and promising. The aspen leaves would quiver and slowly gild, the grass would wave in the wind, the asters would bloom, lifting star-pale faces to the sky. Next autumn, and every year, and forever, as long as the sun warmed the earth!

It was only man who would not always return to the haunts he loved.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE HOME GARDEN

Salad Plants for Fall Use

FEW people indeed do not appreciate a good salad, perhaps more especially during the warm summer months, though it is a welcome addition to the meal at all seasons of the year. However, except a few well-known salads, these vegetables are not grown to the extent they deserve.

If you fail to grow first-class lettuce and celery, there is no reason why you cannot have mustard, cress, nasturtiums, chives and endive. Even without a garden, the three first named can be grown in window boxes; in fact, I have seen them so cultivated. This is just the season to begin preparations for our fall requirements, and by following carefully the directions as to culture and after-management there is nothing to prevent the home gardener from enjoying first-class salad until well into November or even up to Thanksgiving.

Endive is not widely grown in the amateur's garden, though it is most useful for supplying blanched heads in fall, often long after the lettuce is gone, and its value in the household cannot be overestimated when the cultural details are judiciously carried out. Endive, indifferently grown and not well blanched, has a disagreeable and bitter taste which is not pleasant to the palate, but perfectly blanched and well-grown specimens make a most delicious and appetizing salad. Seed may

be sown where the plants will be allowed to finish their growth, or in a seed bed from where they will be transplanted later to their permanent quarters. The simplest and handiest method is to sow in the permanent row; and to prolong the season the thinnings may be removed to other rows.



PHOTO. FROM
NATHAN H. GRAVES
PHOTO COMPANY

The check received in transplanting will bring these plants in two or more weeks after those which were not moved.

If the soil is very heavy or clayey some extra care must be expended on it, breaking it up as fine as possible. The inclusion of some weathered coal ashes will assist in making it more open and friable. In locations that are naturally damp or where much moisture may be expected to lodge it is a good plan to sow or plant on low ridges—about three inches high; but on light soil which is likely to dry out quickly level cultivation must be adhered to.

The advantage of planting on ridges is to keep the lower leaves off the soil, thus avoiding decay. During periods of very wet weather, when the plants have reached the blanching stage, too much moisture continually present about the crown of the plants will often encourage decay, the head rotting off just above the lower leaves.

Endive must have plenty of room, as well-grown plants make quite a large spreading growth before they are ready to



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Where He Did It

HOW HE DID IT

During July and August of last year, Mr. Ellery Mahaffey, acting as the representative of *The Country Gentleman*, *The Ladies' Home Journal* and *The Saturday Evening Post*, earned \$606.40. This is not by any means his "record"—for in a single month his earnings have run well over \$600.00. But it is typical of the sort of effort that has already paid his way through college, and is now taking him through Harvard Law School.

Mr. Mahaffey lives in Western Pennsylvania—perhaps, you think, not the most promising territory in the world for subscription work. But he covers the little towns of his neighborhood with a thoroughness that insures unqualified success. He is selling "goods" that have a universal appeal and he works. That is a winning combination that brings him the dollars. The cold eloquence of figures is a splendid testimonial to his success.

JOURNAL	POST	C. G.
July 196 Subscriptions	147 Subscriptions	20 Subscriptions
August 277 Subscriptions	207 Subscriptions	27 Subscriptions
Total 473 Subscriptions	354 Subscriptions	47 Subscriptions
Total commissions	\$301.20	
Total salaries	305.20	
TOTAL EARNINGS	\$606.40	

YOU CAN DO AS WELL

And since last summer the commissions that we pay have been increased! Your territory is also full of opportunities. Mahaffey visited less than a dozen towns to get the orders included in the figures quoted, and the largest is under 6000 in population! How many such towns are easily accessible from your home?

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CHAFF

A Helpful Hint

"WHEN I was at the age when clumsiness and credulity were my most prominent characteristics," confessed old Festus Pester, "I sent the modest sum of one dollar to an advertiser who promised to return therefor explicit directions for keeping a shotgun from scattering. In due season I received the advice: 'Use only one shot!' Naturally, it was some time before I got over feeling miffed at such barefaced swindling, and a good many years elapsed ere I was able to appreciate the value of the lesson contained in that one line when broadly and philosophically construed.

"Ah! How much better for all of us, I now see, if we would but follow that brief admonition and bunch our hits! We would thus be able to devote our entire energies to our own affairs, and therefore have but little time and inclination to interest ourselves in the affairs of others. I hardly think we would circulate so many petitions, or clamor so loudly that something must immediately be done about something—if there were a real need of something being done we might possibly do it ourselves. Probably we would not so continually work for laws to reform and annoy the other fellow—at least, not until we had reformed ourselves. And I fancy we would not be always importuning busy people to sustain, perpetuate or preserve institutions, traditions and landmarks that were not worth preserving. We might also be so busy that when a tub-shaped Hon. solicited our assistance in his race for office we could do nothing for him but just let him run. And I am quite sure there would be fewer innocent bystanders bystanding round in the way for the pure pleasure of being slain in some horrid and novel manner."

The Good Investment

"MATILDA," said Mr. Golding, "as you earn such good wages now, perhaps you would like me to invest some money for you."

"Thank you, sir," said the serving maid, "but I send all my spare cash to my brother in the West, who puts it in irritated lands!"

Hannah Had No Carfare to Pay

"OH, HENRY," exclaimed Mrs. Green, "Hannah tried to light the fire with gasoline!"

"Gasoline," said Henry calmly. "Did she get it started?"

"Get it started!" replied Mrs. Green.

"Why, it blew her out the window!"

"Oh, well," remarked the philosophic Henry, "it was her afternoon out, anyway!"



Why Their Engagement Was Broken

The Difference

"AH! THEN your idea of a statesman is a man who finds out what the people want and gets it for them?" we asked.

"On the contrary," frankly replied Senator Smugg, "the real statesman is the man who finds out what the people want and then promises it to them. Anticipation is better than realization, and if they had what they wanted

they would often find it was not the beneficent boon they imagined it would be, but instead a detriment, or at least of no advantage to them. And in their disappointment they probably would fall upon the man who got it for them and rend him. But just as long as they think they are going to get it, and do not, it is altogether desirable; and he who promises it to them is their great and good friend."

A Good Excuse

"LOYD, you must stop using such dreadful language," said his mother.

"Where in the world did you learn it?"

"Why, mother," replied the boy, "Shakespeare uses it."

"Well, then," said the mother, "don't play with him any more!"

The Rewards of Punishment

"DOCTOR," called the small boy, "come up to our house quick!"

"Who is sick at your house?" asked the doctor.

"Everybody but me. I'd been naughty, so they would not give me any of the nice mushrooms that pa picked in the woods!"

Some Similarity

"MY WIFE is like Eve," we recently heard.

A certain young husband declare.

"She's not the first woman, but still she is one

Who always has nothing to wear."

—Tennyson J. Daft.

His Bounden Duty

"SUZZ! suzz!" impatiently grumbled old Uncle Mossbacker, who was living with his city relatives. "Here it is, nigh onto half past four in the morning and not a soul in the house up but me! Tain't no use for them to tell me they haven't anything to do till eight o'clock; they ort to have! Laziness is a crime, mighty near! If they haven't anything to do they ort to stir round and find something. I'm twice as old as any of them, and you don't ketch me loafing in bed after the first streak of daylight. No, siree!—I'm up and making such a racket that none of the rest of 'em can sleep!"

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