

Man of the Forest
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December 29 1917

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The COUNTRY GENTLEMAN

The OLDEST AGRICULTURAL JOURNAL in the WORLD

8-21-07
May 10-12-8
L. E. Ellsworth
Boys' Pig Club
May 10-12-8



In This Issue—AS MR. HOOVER SEES IT—By David Lawrence

THE MAN OF THE FOREST

XVII

By Zane Grey, Author of *Wildfire*

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK TENNEY JOHNSON

YOUNG Burt possessed the keenest eyes of any man in Snake Anson's gang, for which reason he was given the post as lookout from the lofty promontory. His instructions were to keep sharp watch over the open slopes below and to report any sight of a horse.

A cedar fire with green boughs on top of dead wood sent up a long pale column of smoke. This signal fire had been kept burning since sunrise.

The preceding night camp had been made on a level spot in the cedars back of the promontory. But manifestly Anson had not expected to remain there long. For after breakfast the packs had been made up and the horses stood saddled and bridled. They were restless and uneasy, tossing bits and fighting flies. The sun, now halfway to meridian, was hot and no breeze blew in that sheltered spot.

Shady Jones had ridden off early to fill the water bags and had not yet returned. Anson, thinner and scallier, and more snake-like than ever, was dealing a greasy, dirty deck of cards, his opponent being the square-shaped, black-visaged Moze. In lieu of money the gamblers wagered with cedar berries, each of which berries represented a pipeful of tobacco.

Jim Wilson brooded under a cedar tree, his unshaven face a dirty dust hue, a smoldering fire in his light eyes, a sullen set to his jaw. Every little while he would raise his eyes to glance at Riggs, and it seemed that a quick glance was enough. Riggs paced to and fro in the open, coatless and hatless, his black broadcloth trousers and embroidered vest dusty and torn. An enormous gun bumped awkwardly in its sheath, swinging below his hip. Riggs looked perturbed. His face was sweating freely, yet it was far from red in color. He did not appear to mind the sun or the flies. His eyes were staring, dark, wild, shifting in gaze from everything they encountered. But often that gaze shot back to the captive girl sitting under a cedar some yards from the men.

Bo Rayner's little booted feet were tied together with one end of a lasso and the other end trailed off over the ground. Her hands were free. Her riding habit was dusty and disordered. Her eyes blazed defiantly out of a small pale face.

"Harve Riggs, I wouldn't be standing in those cheap boots of yours for a million dollars," she said sarcastically.

Riggs took no notice of her words. "You pack that gun sheath wrong end out. What have you got the gun for anyhow?" she added tauntingly.

Snake Anson let out a hoarse laugh and Moze's black visage opened in a huge grin. Jim Wilson seemed to drink in the girl's words. Sullen and somber, he bent his lean head, very still, as if listening.

"You'd better shut up," said Riggs darkly.

"I will not shut up," declared Bo. "Then I'll gag you," he threatened.

"Gag me! Why you dirty, low-down two-bit of a bluff!" she exclaimed hotly. "I'd like to see you try it. I'll tear that long hair of yours right off your head."

Riggs advanced toward her with his hands clutching as if eager to throttle her. The girl leaned forward, her face reddening, her eyes fierce.

"You little cat!" muttered Riggs thickly. "I'll gag you—if you don't stop squallin'."

"Come on! I dare you to lay a hand on me. . . . Harve Riggs, I'm not the least afraid of you. Can't you savvy that? You're a liar, a four-flush, a sneak! Why, you're not fit to wipe the feet of any of these outlaws."

Riggs took two long strides and bent over her, his teeth protruding in a snarl; and he cuffed her hard on the side of the head. Bo's head jerked back with the force of the blow, but she uttered no cry. "Are you goin' to keep your jaw shut?" he demanded stridently, and a dark tide of blood surged up into his neck.

"I should smile I'm not," retorted Bo in cool, deliberate anger of opposition. "You've roped me, and you've struck me! Now get a club—stand off there out of my reach and beat me! Oh, if I only knew cuss words fit for you—I'd call you them!"

Snake Anson had stopped playing cards and was watching, listening, with a half-disgusted, half-amused expression on his



"You White-Livered Card Sharp!
They Told Me You Had a Deal of
Your Own an' Now I Believe It!"

serpentlike face. Jim Wilson slowly rose to his feet. If anyone had observed him it would have been to note that he now seemed singularly fascinated by this scene, yet all the while absorbed in himself. Once he loosened the neckband of his blouse.

Riggs swung his arm more violently at the girl. But she dodged. "You dog!" she hissed. "Oh, if I only had a gun!"

Her face then, with its dead whiteness and the eyes of flame, held a tragic, impelling beauty that stung Anson into remonstrance. "Aw, Riggs, don't beat up the kid," he protested. "Thet won't do any good. Let her alone."

"But she's got to shut up," replied Riggs. "How air you goin' to shet her up? Mebbe if you git out of her sight she'll be quiet. . . . How about thet, girl?"

Anson gnawed his drooping mustache as he eyed Bo. "Have I made any kick to you or your men yet?" she queried.

"It strikes me you ain't," replied Anson. "You won't hear me make any so long as I'm treated decent," said Bo. "I don't know what you've got to do with Riggs. He ran me down—roped me—dragged me to your camp. Now I've a hunch you're waiting for Beasley."

"Girl, your hunch's correct," said Anson. "Well, do you know I'm the wrong girl?"

"What's thet? I reckon you're Nell Rayner, who got left all old Auchincloss's property."

"No. I'm Bo Rayner. Nell is my sister. She owns the ranch. Beasley wanted her."

Anson cursed deep and low. Under his sharp bristling eyebrows he bent cunning green eyes upon Riggs. "Say you! Is what this kid says so?"

"Yes. She's Nell Rayner's sister," replied Riggs doggedly.

"A-huh! Wal, why did you drag her into my camp an' off up here to signal Beasley? He ain't wantin' her. He wants the girl who owns the ranch. Did you take one fer the other—same as thet day we was with you?"

"Guess I must have," replied Riggs sullenly.

"But you knowed her from her sister afore you come to my camp?"

Riggs shook his head. He was paler now and sweating more freely. The dank hair hung wet over his forehead. His manner was that of a man suddenly realizing he had gotten into a tight place.

"Oh, he's a liar!" exclaimed Bo with a contemptuous ring in her voice. "He comes from my country. He has known Nell and me for years."

Snake Anson turned to look at Wilson. "Jim, now hyar's a queer deal this fellar has rung in on us. I thought thet kid was pretty young. Don't you remember Beasley told us Nell Rayner was a handsome woman?"

"Wal, pard Anson, if this heah gurl ain't shore handsome my eyes have gone pore," drawled Wilson.

"A-huh! So your Texas chilvaree over the ladies is some operatin'," retorted Anson with fine sarcasm. "But thet ain't tellin' me what you think."

"Wal, I ain't tellin' you what I think yet. But I know thet kid ain't Nell Rayner. For I've seen her."

Anson studied his right-hand man for a moment, then taking out his tobacco pouch he sat himself down upon a stone and proceeded leisurely to roll a cigarette. He put it between his thin lips and apparently forgot to light it. For a few moments he gazed at the yellow ground and some scant

sagebrush. Riggs took to pacing up and down. Wilson leaned as before against the cedar. The girl slowly recovered from her excess of anger.

"Kid, see hyar," said Anson, addressing the girl, "if Riggs knowed you wasn't Nell and fetched you along anyhow—what'd he do thet fur?"

"He chased me—caught me. Then he saw someone after us and he hurried to your camp. He was afraid—the cur!"

Riggs heard her reply, for he turned a malignant glance upon her. "Anson, I fetched her because I know Nell Rayner will give up anythin' on earth for her," he said in a loud voice.

Anson pondered this statement with an air of considering its apparent sincerity.

"Don't you believe him," declared Bo Rayner bluntly. "He's a liar. He's double-crossing Beasley and all of you."

Riggs raised a shaking hand to clench it at her. "Keep still or it'll be the worse for you."

"Riggs, shut up yourself," put in Anson as he leisurely rose. "Mebbe it ain't occurred to you thet she might have some talk interestin' to me. An' I'm runnin' this hyar camp. . . . Now, kid, talk up an' say what you like."

"I said he was double-crossing you all," replied the girl instantly. "Why, I'm surprised you'd be caught in his company. My uncle Al and my sweetheart Carmichael and my friend Dale—they've all told me what Western men are, even down to outlaws, robbers, cutthroat rascals like you. And I know the West well enough now to be sure that a four-flush doesn't belong here and can't last here. He went to Dodge City once and when he came back he made a bluff at being a bad man. He was a swaggering, bragging, drinking gun-fighter. He talked of the men he'd shot, of the fights he'd had. He dressed like some of those gun-throwing gamblers. . . ."

"He was in love with my sister Nell. She hated him. He followed us out West and he has hung on our actions like a sneaking Indian. Why, Nell and I couldn't even walk to the store in the village. He rode after me out on the range—chased me. . . . For that Carmichael called Riggs's bluff down in Turner's saloon. Dared him to draw. Cussed him every name on the range! Slapped and beat and kicked him! Drove him out of Pine! . . . And now whatever he has said to Beasley or you it's a dead sure bet he's playing his own game. That's to get hold of Nell, and if not her—then me! . . . Oh, I'm out of breath, and I'm out of names to call him. If I talked forever I'd never be able to do him justice. But lend me a gun a minute!"

Jim Wilson's quiet form vibrated with a start. Anson, with an admiring smile, pulled his gun and taking a couple of steps forward held it out butt first. She stretched eagerly for it and he jerked it away.

"Hold on there!" yelled Riggs in alarm. "Jim, she shore meant bizness!" exclaimed the outlaw.

"Wal now, see heah, miss. Would you bore him—if you hed a gun?" inquired Wilson with curious interest. There was more of respect in his demeanor than admiration.

"No. I don't want his cowardly blood on my hands," replied the girl. "But I'd make him dance—I'd make him run."

"Shore you can handle a gun?"

She nodded her answer while her eyes flashed hate and her resolute lips twitched. Then Wilson made a singularly swift motion and his gun was pitched butt first to within a foot of her hand. She snatched it up, cocked it, aimed it, all before Anson could move. But he yelled:

"Drop thet gun, you little devil!"

Riggs turned ghastly as the big blue gun lined on him. He also yelled, but that yell was different from Anson's. "Run or dance!" cried the girl.

The big gun boomed and leaped almost out of her hand. She took both hands and called derisively as she fired again. The second bullet hit at Riggs's feet, scattering the dust and fragments of stone all over him. He bounded here, there, then darted for the rocks. A third time the heavy gun spoke, and this bullet must have ticked Riggs, for he let out a hoarse bawl and leaped sheer for the protection of a rock.

"Plug him! Shoot off a leg!" yelled Snake Anson, whooping and stamping as Riggs got out of sight.

Jim Wilson watched the whole performance with the same quietness that had characterized his manner toward the girl. Then as Riggs disappeared Wilson stepped forward and took the gun from the girl's trembling hands. She was whiter than ever, but still resolute and defiant. Wilson took a glance over in the direction Riggs had hidden and then proceeded to reload the gun. Snake Anson's roar of laughter ceased rather suddenly.

"Hyer, Jim, she might have held up the whole gang with that gun," he protested.

"I reckon she ain't nothin' agin us," replied Wilson.

"A-huh! You know a lot about wimmen now, don't you? But thet did my heart good. Jim, what'n earth would you have did if thet'd been you instead of Riggs?"

The query seemed important and amazing. Wilson pondered. "Shore I'd stood there—stock still—an' never moved an eye-winker."

"An' let her shoot!" ejaculated Anson, nodding his long head. "Me too!"

So these rough outlaws, inured to all the violence and baseness of their dishonest calling, rose to the challenging courage of a slip of a girl. She had the one thing they respected—nerve.

Just then a halloo from the promontory brought Anson up with a start. Muttering to himself he strode out toward the jagged rocks that hid the outlook. Moze shuffled his burly form after Anson.

"Miss, it shore was grand—thet performance of Mister Gun-Man Riggs," remarked Jim Wilson, studying the girl.

"Much obliged to you for lending me your gun," she replied. "I—I hope I hit him—a little."

"Wal, if you didn't sting him, then Jim Wilson knows nothin' about lead."

"Jim Wilson? Are you the man—the outlaw my uncle Al knew?"

"Reckon I am, miss. Fer I knowed Al shore enough. What'd he say about me?"

"I remember once he was telling me about Snake Anson's gang. He mentioned you. Said you were a real gun-fighter. And what a shame it was you had to be an outlaw."

"Wal! An' so old Al spoke thet nice of me! . . . It's tolerable likely I'll remember. An' now, miss, can I do anythin' for you?"

Swift as a flash she looked at him. "What do you mean?"

"Wal, shore I don't mean much, I'm sorry to say. Nothin' to make you look like thet. . . . I hev to be an outlaw, shore as you're born. But mebbe there's a difference in outlaws."

She understood him and paid him the compliment not to voice her sudden up-flashing hope that he might be one to betray his leader.

"Please take this rope off my feet. Let me walk a little. Let me have a—little privacy. That fool watched every move I made. I promise not to run away. And oh, I'm thirsty!"

"Shore you've got sense." He freed her feet and helped her get up. "There'll be some fresh water any minnit now, if you'll wait."

Then he turned his back and walked over to where Riggs sat nursing a bullet burn on his leg.

"Say, Riggs, I'm takin' the responsibility of loosin' the girl for a little spell. She can't get away. An' there ain't any sense in bein' mean."

Riggs made no reply and went on rolling down his trouser leg, lapped a fold over at the bottom and pulled on his boot. Then he strode out toward the promontory. Halfway there he encountered Anson tramping back.

"Beasley's comin' one way an' Shady's comin' another. We'll be off this hot point of rock by noon," said the outlaw leader.

Riggs went on to the promontory to look for himself.

"Where's the girl?" demanded Anson in surprise when he got back to the camp.

"Wal, she's walkin' round between heah an' Pine," drawled Wilson.

"Jim, you let her loose?"

"Shore I did. She's been hawg-tied all the time. An' she said she'd not run off. I'd take thet girl's word even to a sheep thief."

"A-huh! So would I, for all of thet. But, Jim, somethin's workin' in you. Ain't you sort of rememberin' a time when you was young—an' mebbe knowed pretty kids like this one?"

"Wal, if I am it'll shore turn out bad for somebody."

Anson gave him a surprised stare and suddenly lost the bantering tone. "A-huh! So thet's how it's workin'," he replied, and flung himself down in the shade.

Young Burt made his appearance then, wiping his sallow face. His deep-set, hungry eyes, upon which his comrades set such store, roved round the camp.

"Whar's the girl?" he queried.

"Jim let her go out fer a stroll," replied Anson.

"I seen Jim was gittin' softy over her. Haw! Haw! Haw!"

But Snake Anson did not crack a smile. The atmosphere appeared not to be congenial for jokes, a fact Burt rather suddenly divined. Riggs and Moze returned from the promontory, the latter reporting that Shady Jones was riding up close. Then the girl walked slowly into sight and approached to find a seat within ten yards of the group. They waited in silence until the expected horseman rode up with water bottles slung on both sides of his saddle. His advent was welcome. All the men were thirsty. Wilson took water to the girl before drinking himself.

"Thet's an all-fired hot ride fer water," declared the outlaw Shady, who somehow fitted his name in color and impression. "An', boss, if it's the same to you I won't take it agin."

"Cheer up, Shady. We'll be rustlin' back in the mountains before sundown," said Anson. "Hang me if thet ain't the cheerfulest news I've hed in some days. Hey, Moze?"

The black-faced Moze nodded his shaggy head. "I'm sick an' sore of this deal," broke out Burt, evidently encouraged by his elders. "Ever since last fall we've been hangin' round—till jest lately freezin' in camps—no money, no drink, no grub wuth havin'. All on promises!"

Not improbably this young and reckless member of the gang had struck the note of discord. Wilson seemed most detached from any sentiment prevailing there. Some strong thoughts were revolving in his brain.

"You insinuat' thet I made promises?" inquired Anson.

"No, boss, I ain't. You allus said we might hit it rich. But them promises was made to you. An' it'd be jest like thet greaser to go back on his word now we got the gurl."

"Son, it happens we got the wrong one. Our long-haired pard hyar—Mister Riggs—him with the big gun—he waltzes up with this sassy kid instead of the woman Beasley wanted."

Burt snorted his disgust while Shady Jones, roundly swearing, pelted the smoldering camp fire with stones. Then they all lapsed into surlly silence. The object of their growing scorn, Riggs, sat a little way apart, facing none of them, but maintaining as bold a front as apparently he could muster.

Presently a horse shot up his ears, the first indication of scent or sound imperceptible to the men. But with this cue they all, except Wilson, sat up attentively. Soon the crack of iron-shod hoofs on stone broke the silence. Riggs nervously rose to his feet. And the others, still excepting Wilson, one by one followed suit. In another moment a rangy bay horse trotted out of the cedars, up to the camp, and his rider jumped off nimbly for so heavy a man.

"Howdy, Beasley," was Anson's greeting.

"Hello, Snake, old man," replied Beasley as his bold, snapping black eyes swept the group. He was dusty and hot, and wet with sweat, yet evidently too excited to feel discomfort. "I seen your smoke signal first off an' jumped my hoss quick. But I rode north of Pine before I headed round this way. Did you corral the girl or did Riggs? Say, you look queer! . . . What's wrong here? You haven't signalled me for nothin'?"

SNAKE ANSON beckoned to Bo. "Come out of the shade. Let him look you over."

The girl walked out from under the spreading cedar that had hidden her from sight. Beasley stared aghast—his jaw dropped.

"Thet's the kid sister of the woman I wanted!" he ejaculated.

"So we've jest been told."

Astonishment still held Beasley. "Told!" he echoed. Suddenly his big body leaped with a start. "Who got her? Who fetched her?"

"Why, Mister Gun-Man Riggs hyar," replied Anson with a subtle scorn.

"Riggs, you got the wrong girl," shouted Beasley. "You made thet mistake once before. What're you up to?"

"I chased her, an' when I got her, seein' it wasn't Nell Rayner—why, I kept her anyhow," replied Riggs. "An' I've got a word for your ear alone."

"Man, you're crazy—queerin' my deal thet way!" roared Beasley. "You heard my plans. . . . Riggs, this girl stealin' can't be done twice. Was you drinkin' or locoed or what?"

"Beasley, he was giving you the double-cross," cut in Bo Rayner's cool voice.

The rancher stared speechlessly at her, then at Anson, then at Wilson, and last at Riggs, when his brown visage shaded dark with a rush of purple blood. With one lunge he knocked Riggs flat, then stood over him with a convulsive hand at his gun.

"You white-livered card sharp! I've a notion to bore you. . . . They told me you had a deal of your own an' now I believe it."

"Yes, I had," replied Riggs, cautiously getting up. He was ghastly. "But I wasn't double-crossin' you. Your deal was to get the girl away from home so you could take possession of her property. An' I wanted her."

"What for did you fetch the sister then?" demanded Beasley, his big jaw bulging.

"Because I've a plan to —"

"Plan nothing. You've spoiled my plan, an' I've seen about enough of you." Beasley breathed hard; his lowering gaze boded an uncertain will toward the man who had crossed him; his hand still hung low and clutching.

"Beasley, tell them to get my horse. I want to go home," said Bo Rayner.

Slowly Beasley turned. Her words enjoined a silence. What to do with her now appeared a problem.

"I had nothin' to do with fetchin' you here an' I'll have nothin' to do with sendin' you back or whatever's done with you," declared Beasley.

Then the girl's face flashed white again and her eyes changed to fire. "You're as big a liar as Riggs," she cried passionately. "And you're a thief, a bully who picks on defenseless girls. Oh, we know your game! Milt Dale heard you plot with this outlaw Anson to steal my sister. You ought to be hanged—you half-breed greaser!"

"I'll cut out your tongue!" hissed Beasley.

"Yes, I'll bet you would if you had me alone. But these outlaws—these sheep thieves—these tools you hire—are better than you and Riggs. . . . What do you suppose Carmichael will do to you? Carmichael! He's my sweetheart—that cowboy. You know what he did to Riggs. Have you brains enough to know what he'll do to you?"

"He'll not do much," growled Beasley. But the thick, purplish blood was receding from his face. "Your cow-puncher —"

"Bah!" she interrupted, and she snapped her fingers in his face. "He's from Texas! He's from Texas!"

"Supposin' he is from Texas," demanded Beasley in angry irritation. "What's thet? Texans are all over. There's Jim Wilson, Snake Anson's right-hand man. He's from Texas. But thet ain't scarin' anyone."

He pointed toward Wilson, who shifted uneasily from foot to foot. The girl's flaming glance followed his hand.

"Are you from Texas?" she asked.

"Yes, miss, I am—an' I reckon I don't deserve it," replied Wilson. It was certain that a vague shame attended his confession.

"Oh, I believed even a bandit from Texas would fight for a helpless girl!" she replied in withering scorn of disappointment.

Jim Wilson dropped his head. If anyone there suspected a serious turn in Wilson's attitude toward that situation it was the keen outlaw leader.

"Beasley, you're courtin' death," he broke in.

"You bet you are!" added Bo with a passion that made her listeners quiver. "You've put me at the mercy of a gang of outlaws! You may force my sister out of her home! But your day will come! Tom Carmichael will kill you!"

Beasley mounted his horse. Sullen, livid, furious, he sat shaking in the saddle, to glare down at the outlaw leader.

"Snake, thet's no fault of mine the deal's miscarried. I was square. I made my offer for the workin' out of my plan. It ain't been done. Now I'm through."

"Beasley, I reckon I couldn't hold you to anythin'," replied Anson slowly. "But



"Plug Him! Shoot Off a Leg!" Yelled Snake Anson, Whooping and Stamping

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if you was square you ain't square now. We've hung round an' tried hard. My men are all sore. An' we're broke, with no outfit to speak of. Me an' you never fell out before. But I reckon we might."

"Wal, I wash my hands of the whole deal. Make Riggs pay up. He's got money an' he's got plans. Go in with him."

With that Beasley spurred his horse, wheeled and rode away.

"What'd you expect from a greaser?" queried Shady Jones.

Only Riggs showed immense relief.

"Anson, stake me to some of your outfit an' I'll ride off with the girl," he said eagerly.

"Where'd you go now?" queried Anson. "You're no woodsman. An' unless you're plumb locoed you'd never risk goin' near Pine or Show Down. There'll be real trackers huntin' your trail."

The listening girl suddenly appealed to Wilson. "Don't let him take me off—alone—in the woods!" she faltered.

Jim Wilson broke into gruff reply: "I'm not bossin' this gang."

"But you're a man!" she importuned.

"Riggs, you fetch along your precious firebrand an' come with us," said Anson craftily. "I'm particular curious to see her brand you."

"Snake, lemme take the girl back to Pine," said Jim Wilson.

Anson swore his amazement.

"It's sense," continued Wilson. "We've shore got our own troubles, an' keepin' her'll only add to them. I've a hunch. Now you know I ain't often givin' to buckin' your say-so. But this deal ain't tastin' good to me. Thet girl ought to be sent home."

"But mebbe there's somethin' in it for us. Her sister'd pay to git her back."

"Wal, I shore hope you'll recollect I offered—that's all," concluded Wilson.

"Jim, if we wanted to git rid of her we'd let Riggs take her off," remonstrated the outlaw leader. He was perturbed and undecided. Wilson worried him.

The long Texan veered round full-faced.

"Like—we would!" he said mildly.

It could not have been the tone that caused Anson to quail. He might be leader here, but he was not the greater man. His face clouded.

"Break camp," he ordered.

Riggs had probably not heard that last exchange between Anson and Wilson, for he had walked a few rods aside to get his horse.

In a few moments, when they started off, Burt, Jones and Moze were in the lead, driving the pack horses; Anson rode next, the girl came between him and Riggs, and, significantly it seemed, Jim Wilson brought up the rear.

man. And he has always an abundance of such laborers.

Attention has been paid also to developing a cordial relation between managers and tenants. Thus, although Mr. Bledsoe does not himself provide cows for his tenants, he permits each manager to let the tenants under him make use of cows belonging to the manager himself. The tenant gets the milk in return for his service in raising the calf and taking care of the cow for their owner. By this arrangement a common interest is created that contributes to friendly relations between the negro worker and the man who supervises his labor.

Negroes stay well in the Shellmound neighborhood; there is a movement from one plantation to another in that locality of about ten per cent each year on the average. In connection with this it is worth noting that comfortable housing is a conspicuous feature of the treatment of the negroes both on the plantation of Mr. Bledsoe and on the plantations of his neighbors.

That he is successful in attaining the two-fold object of labor management, in that he keeps the laborer hopeful and wins the confidence of the negro, is strikingly shown by a recent incident. When the second Liberty Loan was being secured, Mr. Bledsoe was the committeeman for the Shellmound district in Leflore County. He set the example for his neighbors and for his own tenants by underwriting the sale of \$15,000 worth of bonds. Then he called his tenants together at the church, told them what he had done,

This start was made a little after the noon hour. They zigzagged up the slope, took to a deep ravine, and followed it up to where it headed in the level forest. From there travel was rapid.

Sunset had gone and the twilight was momentarily brightening to the afterglow when Anson, breaking his silence of the afternoon, ordered a halt.

The place was wild, dismal, a shallow vale between dark slopes of spruce. Grass, firewood and water were there in abundance. All the men were off, throwing saddles and packs, before the tired girl made an effort to get down. Riggs, observing her, made a not ungentle move to pull her off. She gave him a sounding slap with her gloved hand.

"Keep your paws to yourself," she said. Many hands made quick work. In a few moments a fire was burning brightly, water was boiling, pots were steaming, the odor of venison shot that afternoon permeated the cool air. The girl had at last slipped off her saddle to the ground, where she sat while Riggs led the horse away. She sat there apparently forgotten, a pathetic droop to her head.

Wilson had taken an ax and was vigorously wielding it among the spruces. Presently he appeared in the semi-darkness dragging half-trimmed spruces behind him. He made several trips, the last staggering under a huge burden of spruce boughs. These he spread under a low projecting branch of an aspen. Then he leaned the spruces slantingly against this branch on both sides, quickly improvising a V-shaped shelter with a narrow aperture in front.

Next from one of the packs he took a blanket and threw that inside the shelter.

Then touching the girl on the shoulder he whispered: "When you're ready slip in there. An' don't lose no sleep by worryin', for I'll be layin' right here."

He made a motion to indicate his length across the front of the narrow aperture.

"Oh, thank you! Maybe you really are a Texan," she whispered back.

"Mebbe," was his gloomy reply.

The girl refused to take food proffered her by Riggs, but she ate and drank a little that Wilson brought her; then she disappeared in the spruce lean-to.

Riggs sought his blanket first, and the fact was significant that he lay down some distance from the spruce shelter which contained Bo Rayner. Presently young Burt went off grumbling to his bed. And not long afterward Moze and Shady did likewise. Snake Anson and Jim Wilson were left brooding in silence beside the dying camp fire.

The night was dark, with only a few stars showing. A fitful wind moaned through

the spruce. An occasional thump of hoof sounded from the dark woods. No cry of wolf or coyote or cat gave reality to the wildness of forest land.

By and by those men who had rolled in their blankets were breathing deeply and slowly in heavy slumber.

"Jim, I take it this hyar Riggs has queered our deal," said Snake Anson in low voice.

"I reckon," replied Wilson.

"An' I'm feared he's queered this hyar White Mountain country fer us."

"Shore I ain't got so far as thet."

"Wilson, I never was keen on this girl deal—now was I?"

"I reckon it's honest to say no to thet," replied Wilson. "But it's done. Beasley'll get plugged sooner or later. Thet won't help us any. Chasin' sheep herders out of the country an' stealin' sheep—thet ain't stealin' gurls. Beasley'll blame thet on us an' be greaser enough to send some of his men out to hunt us. For Pine an' Show Down won't stand thet long. There's them Mormons. They'll be bad when they wake up. Suppose Carmichael got thet hunter Dale an' them hawk-eyed Beemans on our trail?"

"Wal, we'd cash in—quick," replied Anson gruffly. "Jim, I know as well as you thet this hyar gang is hard put. We're goin' to be trailed an' chased. We've got to hide—be on the go all the time."

"Shore. But, Snake, you ain't takin' no 'count of the feelin's of the men—an' of mine an' yours. . . . I'll bet you my hoss thet in a day or so this gang will go to pieces."

"I'm feared you spoke what's been crowdin' to git in my mind," replied Anson. Then he threw up his hands in a strange gesture of resignation. At length he rose, and without another word to his comrade walked wearily to where lay the dark quiet forms of the sleepers.

Jim Wilson remained beside the flickering fire. After a while he put some sticks on the red embers, then pulled the end of a log over them. A blaze sputtered up, changing the dark circle and showing the sleepers with their set, shadowed faces upturned. Wilson gazed on all of them, a sardonic smile on his lips; and then his look fixed upon the sleeper apart from the others—Riggs. It might have been the false light of flame and shadow that created Wilson's expression of dark and terrible hate. When that dark gaze was withdrawn Wilson stalked away to make his bed.

He laid his saddle in front of the spruce shelter where the girl had entered, and his tarpaulin and blankets likewise, and then wearily stretched his long length to rest.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Cotton Hands That Stay

(Concluded from Page 21)

explained what a good investment the bonds were and asked them to think it over, adding that if they wanted to buy bonds to come to him later in the week. At this point one negro rose and said:

"We doesn't have to wait to make up our minds. The time to do a thing is now. I wants to take a bond."

That started the ball rolling and in a few moments \$3500 had been subscribed.

"I planned to sell them only \$5000 worth of bonds," Mr. Bledsoe told me. "But before the week was out the negroes had over-subscribed that amount. Over a hundred of my tenants took bonds, and one of my neighbors sold a bond to every tenant he had."

Another illustration of success in labor management is to be found on the plantation of W. L. Craig, located just outside the Greenwood city limits. Nearness to such a thriving community as this county seat introduces certain difficulties; but these Mr. Craig has overcome. For example, recently the wages of unskilled labor in Greenwood had a sudden rise.

"My hands asked for more money than they were getting," Mr. Craig remarked. "But we settled the matter by talking it over together. It so happened that one of the men living on the plantation had been working in Greenwood just before coming to me. I had him tell the others his experience there—how much house rent he had to pay; how much his fuel cost and his water rent. Then I pointed out that on my place they got all these things in addition to their

money wages. And besides they have a garden spot free here on which they can raise much of their living; and this they do not get in town. After we had talked the matter over in this way my hands saw I was really paying them more than they could get at higher money wages in town, so they stayed with me."

Part of the explanation of Mr. Craig's success is found in the person of his manager, Mr. Kerr.

"How do you hold your negro labor?" I asked. Mr. Kerr's answer goes to the root of the matter:

"We give them a square deal."

The success of this policy is evidenced by the fact that, of fifty-five families that were on the plantation when Mr. Craig took charge eight years ago, thirty-one still remain.

The problem of labor management on Mississippi delta plantations, as I have already pointed out, is at bottom a problem of human nature. In the solution personality is of equal value with method.

Different though these men I have quoted are, I find that they have certain things in common: They are good farmers, so that the tenants who work under their supervision have plenty to eat and clear money when the crop is sold. They are firm, just men, who take a friendly interest in the personal welfare of the negroes. But those are most readily successful who add to the essential qualities of justice, humanity and efficiency a humorous delight in the whimsies of negro character.

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The Diplomat of the Open Range

(Concluded from Page 9)

more than once a year in any district, and, as many rabbits escape, the drive the next year has as big a round-up as ever.

These drives also have been aimed at the coyotes, and as the organization and procedure are very similar, a description of one recently held in the Wind River Valley, Wyoming, will show the methods.

It is a stock country—all open range—and the stockmen organized a wolf round-up which resulted in the greatest killing of wild animals in one day since Noah's time.

Six hundred mounted cowboys and three hundred Shoshone and Arapahoe Indians did the work, aided by many men who came on horses, in wagons and autos from all parts of the mountain states. A printed program was handed to each man, stating the operations very clearly. This is a reprint of it:

"Seventeen companies, each consisting of thirty to forty riders under the command of a captain and four lieutenants, shall constitute the main portion of the drive. They will be joined by all visitors who may come in and by others on foot. Each captain will see that his company is properly provided with provisions and blankets, and a water barrel must be on each wagon. Each rider should provide himself with a tin plate, cup, knife, fork and spoon, blankets, hobbles and a canteen for water. Ample provisions will be furnished by the committee in charge.

"Fifteen hundred square miles of range land will be combed. This vast area is as Nature made it—free from fences or other works of man, and the only obstacles in the way of the riders are those placed by Nature. A reinforced stock-proof corral covering ten acres has been constructed in the center of the area to be driven, and it is of sufficient strength and height to hold any animal that may be driven in. This corral is twenty-five miles from Riverton, Wyoming.

"The companies of riders will go to their starting places along a circle about twenty miles from the corral on the evening before the drive, and camp for the night. Next morning at 5:30 o'clock they will start under the captain's orders. At the beginning the men will be a quarter of a mile apart, or less, and will come closer together as they near the center. All companies will advance under time allowed for their respective distances, and when they reach a point ten miles from the corral they will find a plowed furrow where they must all halt for orders.

"At 11 A. M. they will encounter another furrow five miles from the corral, where they will wait again until the entire line is at that furrow. Then they will work up to the corral, letting all autos come up and line round the fence. This should finish at 2 P. M., and lunch will be taken. Then the animals corralled will be slaughtered."

After the drive started and reached the ten-mile furrow there were over 2000 coyotes being driven, but as the drive neared the center many of the men, impelled by fatigue and thirst, bunched round the water wagons. That allowed a number of the frantic coyotes to dart through the line and escape.

Seven hundred and fifty was the number killed. In the corral were also twenty antelopes, one black bear, a few gray wolves and hundreds of wild horses and steers.

The rabbit drives are similarly organized, but cover much smaller territory.

All of the drives are but spasmodic flurries of destruction and usually held as much for the exciting sport as from any particular desire for extermination. Men from towns and cities participate largely, the railroads always giving reduced fares and the farmers or stockmen furnishing welcome in the shape of teams, accommodations and supplies. They are but little skirmishes.

There are other destructive animals—pocket gophers, field mice, kangaroo rats and woodchucks. Collectively they do great damage to crops, young trees, dams and embankments. Here again comes in a broad opinion which leads to diverse and often contradictory decisions for or against extermination.

David E. Lantz, before quoted, says:

"Many of the rodents live in deserts, mountains and swamps and rarely come in contact with cultivated crops. These cannot be classed as injurious; and many of them are beneficial to the soil, as they stir it up and fit it for future agricultural uses. A few rodents feed largely upon insects and help to keep a check upon the hordes of grasshoppers and similar pests. Certain of the rodents, too, such as the beaver and the muskrat, have a decided economic value as fur bearers; while others, such as the rabbits and squirrels, afford sport in hunting and are useful as human food."

There have been strong efforts for two years past by the Biological Service, the county agents and some of the farmers' associations to secure state legislation to abolish the bounties and to appropriate the money to a poisoning campaign.

Most of the farmers and stockmen feel a grim shudder of apprehension at distributing poisoned-grain bait anywhere; and if that isn't a reasonable shudder, what is it? Meat baits are different. They tempt no stock except hogs, and hogs are not found on the open range. And, to complicate it all, the rangers and other good authorities assert positively that using meat baits only, killing off only the carnivorous animals, will abolish the destroyer of the rodents and will be followed instantly by an appalling increase in those destructive pests.

A morning newspaper recently published the following item:

"Provo, Utah.—Nov. 10.—Rabid coyotes are spreading their disease among other coyotes and are infecting dogs and cattle near Provo, according to information received yesterday by Thomas Redmond, secretary of the state livestock board. The epidemic, he was told, is extending over the eastern slope of the Wahsatch Range.

"Both desert and mountain coyotes are becoming infected. Livestock owners have taken up arms and set traps in an endeavor to exterminate the animals."

Not a week has passed during the past year that has not brought in some such report as this, and as most of the coyotes have been killed and the brains examined by professionals, there is no doubt about the rabies. In fact, it has been known for years that a sane coyote never attacks a human or a large dog.

Curiously, in all these reports none have shown that more than one afflicted animal appeared at the same time from the same district, and it is stated by men who watch and study that the instant a coyote shows signs of madness its fellows organize and run it off the range.

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No semi-annual index will be issued on January first, as has been our previous custom. We shall be glad to send indexes for previous volumes, on request, so long as they last.