

Man of the Forest
P22

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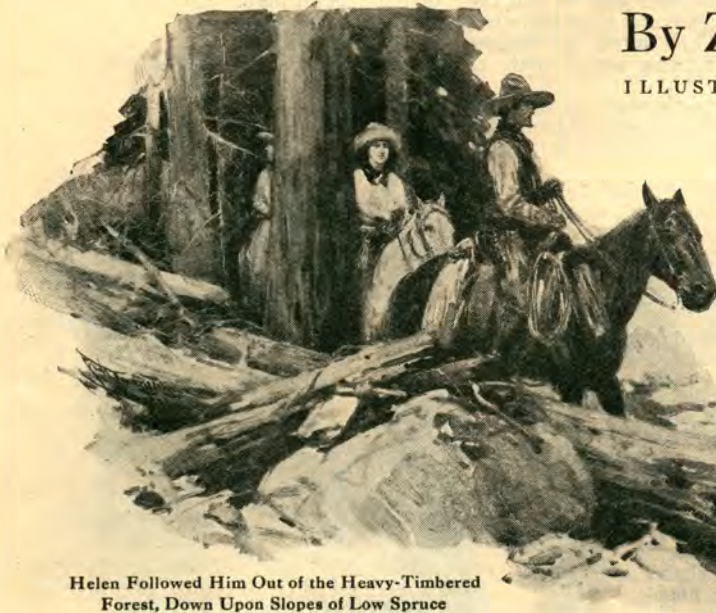


In This Issue—The Farmer's Share of Retail Prices

THE MAN OF THE FOREST

By Zane Grey, Author of Wildfire

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK TENNEY JOHNSON



Helen Followed Him Out of the Heavy-Timbered Forest, Down Upon Slopes of Low Spruce

IX

A SILENCE ensued, fraught with poignant fear for Helen as she gazed into Bo's whitening face. She read her sister's mind. Bo was remembering tales of lost people who never were found.

"Me an' Milt get lost every day," said Roy. "You don't suppose any man can know all this big country. It's nothin' for us to be lost."

"Oh! . . . I was lost when I was little," said Bo.

"Wal, I reckon it'd have been better not to tell you so offhand like," replied Roy contritely. "Don't feel bad now. All I need is a peek at Old Baldy. Then I'll have my bearin'." Come on.

Helen's confidence returned as Roy led off at a fast trot. He rode toward the westering sun, keeping to the ridge they had ascended, until once more he came out upon a promontory. Old Baldy loomed there, blacker and higher and closer. The dark forest showed round, yellow, bare spots like parks.

"Not so far off the track," said Roy as he wheeled his horse. "We'll make camp in Milt's seneca to-night."

He led off down the ridge into a valley and then up to a higher altitude, where the character of the forest changed. The trees were no longer pines, but firs and spruce, growing thin and exceedingly tall, with few branches below the topmost foliage. So dense was this forest that twilight seemed to have come.

Travel was arduous. Everywhere were windfalls that had to be avoided, and there was not a rod without a fallen tree. The horses, laboring slowly, sometimes sank knee deep into the brown duff. Gray moss festooned the tree trunks and an amber-green moss grew thick on the rotting logs.

Helen loved this forest primeval. But time came when the exceeding wildness of the forest, in density and fallen timber, made it imperative for her to put all her attention on ground and trees in her immediate vicinity. Thereafter travel became toil and the hours endless.

Roy led on and Ranger followed while the shadows darkened under the trees. She was reeling in her saddle, half blind and sick, when Roy called out cheerily that they were almost there.

Whatever his idea was, to Helen it seemed many miles farther that she followed him out of the heavy-timbered forest, down upon slopes of low spruce, like evergreen, which descended sharply to another level, where dark, shallow streams flowed gently and the solemn stillness held a low murmur of falling water. At last the wood ended upon a wonderful park full of a thick, rich, golden light of fast-fading sunset.

"Smell the smoke," said Roy. "By Solomon, if Milt ain't here ahead of me!"

He rode on. Helen's weary gaze took in the round seneca, the circling black slopes, leading up to craggy rims all gold and red in the last flare of the sun; and then all the spirit left in her flashed up in thrilling wonder at this exquisite, wild and colorful spot.

Horses were grazing out in the long grass and there were deer grazing with them.

which poured a thin, lacy waterfall. As Helen gazed in rapture the sunset gold faded to white and all the western slope of the amphitheater darkened.

Dale's tall form appeared. "Reckon you're late," he said as with a comprehensive flash of eye he took in the three.

"Milt, I got lost," replied Roy.

"I feared as much. . . . You girls look like you'd done better to ride with me," went on Dale as he offered a hand to help Bo off. She took it, tried to get her feet out of the stirrups, and then slid from the saddle into Dale's arms. He placed her on her feet and, supporting her, said solicitously: "A hundred-mile ride in three days for a tenderfoot is somethin' your Uncle Al won't believe. . . . Come, walk if it kills you!"

Whereupon he led Bo very much as if he were teaching a child to walk. The fact that Bo had nothing to say was significant to Helen, who was following with the assistance of Roy.

One of the huge rocks resembled a sea shell in that it contained a hollow over which the wide-spreading shelf flared out. It reached toward branches of great pines. A spring burst from a crack in the solid rock. The camp fire blazed under a pine and the blue column of smoke rose just in front of the shelving rock. Packs were lying on the grass and some of them were open. There were no signs here of a permanent habitation of the hunter. But farther on were other huge rocks, leaning, cracked, and forming caverns, some of which perhaps he utilized.

"My camp is just back," said Dale as if he had read Helen's mind. "To-morrow we'll fix up comfortable like round here for you girls."

Helen and Bo were made as easy as blankets and saddles could make them; and the men went about their tasks.

"Nell, isn't this a dream?" murmured Bo. "No, child. It's real—terribly real," replied Helen. "Now that we're here, with that awful ride over, we can think."

"It's so pretty here," yawned Bo. "I'd just as lief Uncle Al didn't find us very soon."

"Bo! He's a sick man. Think what the worry will be to him."

When Helen stretched out she had a vague, delicious sensation that that was the end of Helen Rayner, and she was glad. Twilight was stealing down swiftly. The silence was beautiful, seemingly undisturbed by the soft, silky, dreamy fall of water. Helen closed her eyes, ready for sleep. Bo's head dropped on her shoulder. Sense became vague to Helen. She lost the low murmur of the waterfall and then the sound or feeling of someone at the camp fire. And her last conscious thought was that she tried to open her eyes and could not.

When she awoke all was bright. The sun shone almost directly overhead. Helen was astounded. Bo lay wrapped in deep sleep, her face flushed, with beads of perspiration on her brow and the chestnut curls damp. Helen threw down the blankets; and then gathering courage, for she felt as if her back

was broken, she endeavored to sit up. In vain! Her spirit was willing, but her muscles refused to act. It must take a violent, spasmodic effort. She tried it with shut eyes and, succeeding, sat there trembling. The commotion she had made in the blankets awoke Bo, and she blinked her surprised blue eyes in the sunlight.

"Hello, Nell; do I have to get up?" she asked sleepily.

"Can you?" queried Helen.

"Can I what?" Bo was now thoroughly awake and lay there staring at her sister.

"Why—get up."

"I'd like to know why not," retorted Bo as she made the effort. She got one arm and shoulder up, only to flop back like a crippled thing. And she uttered the most piteous little moan. "I'm dead! I know I am!"

"Well, if you're going to be a Western girl you'd better have spunk enough to move."

"A-huh!" ejaculated Bo. Then she rolled over, not without groans, and, once upon her face, she raised herself on her hands and turned to a sitting posture. "Where's everybody?"

Helen looked round. A fire was smoldering. No one was in sight. Wonderful distant colors seemed to strike her glance as she tried to fix it upon near-by objects. A beautiful little green tent or shack had been erected out of spruce boughs. It had a slanting roof that sloped all the way from a ridge pole to the ground; half of the opening in front was closed, as were the sides. The spruce boughs appeared all to be laid in the same direction, giving it a smooth, compact appearance, actually as if it had grown there.

"That lean-to wasn't there last night," said Bo.

"I didn't see it. Lean-to? Where'd you get that name?"

"It's Western, my dear. I'll bet they put it up for us. . . . Sure, I see our bags inside. Let's get up. It must be late."

The girls had considerable fun as well as pain in getting up and keeping each other erect until their limbs would hold them firmly. They were delighted with the spruce lean-to. It faced the open and stood just under the wide-spreading shelf of rock. The tiny outlet from the spring flowed beside it and spilled its clear water over a stone, to fall into a little pool. The floor of this woodland habitation consisted of tips of spruce boughs, to about a foot in depth, all laid one way, smooth and springy, and so sweetly odorous that the air seemed intoxicating.

Helen and Bo opened their baggage; and what with use of the cold water, and brush and comb, and clean blouses, they made themselves feel as comfortable as possible, considering the excruciating aches. Then they went out to the camp fire.

Helen's eye was attracted by moving objects near at hand. Then simultaneously with Bo's cry of delight Helen saw a beautiful doe approaching under the trees. Dale walked beside it.

"You sure had a long sleep," was the hunter's greeting. "I reckon you both look better."

"Good morning. Or is it afternoon? We're just able to move about," said Helen.

"I could ride," declared Bo stoutly. "Oh, Nell, look at the deer! It's coming to me."

The doe had hung back a little as Dale reached the camp fire. It was a gray, slender creature, as smooth as silk, with great dark eyes. It stood a moment, long ears erect, and then with a graceful little trot came up to Bo and reached a slim nose for her outstretched hand. All about it, except the beautiful soft eyes, seemed wild, and yet it was as tame as a kitten. Then, suddenly, as Bo fondled the long ears it gave a start, and breaking away ran back out of sight under the pines.

"What frightened it?" asked Bo.

Dale pointed up at the wall under the shelving roof of rock. There, twenty feet above, curled up on a ledge, lay a huge, tawny animal with a face like that of a cat.



Bo Enticed the Bear Cub Round to the Camp

"She's afraid of Tom," replied Dale. "Recognizes him as a hereditary foe, I guess. I can't make friends of them."

"Oh! So that's Tom—the pet lion!" exclaimed Bo. "Ugh! No wonder that deer ran off!"

"How long has he been up there?" queried Helen, gazing fascinated at Dale's famous pet.

"I couldn't say. Tom comes an' goes," replied Dale. "But I sent him up there last night."

"And he was there—perfectly free—right over us while we slept?" burst out Bo.

"Yes. An' I reckon you slept the safer for that."

"Of all things! Nell, isn't he a monster? But he doesn't look like a lion—an African lion. He's a panther. I saw his like at the circus once."

"He's a cougar," said Dale. "The panther is long and slim. Tom is not only long but thick an' round. I've had him four years. An' he was a kitten no bigger'n my fist when I got him."

"Is he perfectly tame—safe?" asked Helen anxiously.

"I've never told anybody that Tom was safe, but he is," replied Dale. "You can absolutely believe it. A wild cougar wouldn't attack a man unless cornered or starved. An' Tom is like a big cat."

The beast raised his great catlike face with its sleepy half-shut eyes and looked down upon them.

"Shall I call him down?" inquired Dale.

For once Bo did not find her voice.

"Let us get a little more used to him—at a distance," replied Helen with a little laugh.

"If he comes to you just rub his head an' you'll see how tame he is," said Dale. "Reckon you're both hungry?"

"Not so very," returned Helen, aware of his penetrating gray gaze upon her.

"Well, I am," vouchsafed Bo.

"Soon as the turkey's done we'll eat. My camp is round between the rocks. I'll call you."

Not until his broad back was turned did Helen notice that the hunter looked different. Then she saw he wore a lighter, cleaner suit of buckskin, with no coat, and instead of the high-heeled horseman's boots he wore moccasins and leggins. The change made him appear more lithe.

"Nell, I don't know what you think, but I call him handsome," declared Bo.

Helen had no idea what she thought.

"Let's try to walk some," she suggested. So they essayed that painful task and got as far as a pine log some few rods from their camp. This point was close to the edge of the park, from which there was an unobstructed view.

"My! What a place!" exclaimed Bo with eyes wide and round.

"Oh, beautiful!" breathed Helen.

An unexpected blaze of color drew her gaze first. Out of the black spruce slopes shone patches of aspens, gloriously red and gold, and low down along the edge of timber troops of aspens ran out into the park, not yet so blazing as those above, but

purple and yellow and white in the sunshine. Masses of silver spruce, like trees in moonlight, bordered the park. Long, golden-green grass, resembling half-ripe wheat, covered the entire floor of the park, gently waving to the wind. Above sheered the black, gold-patched slopes, steep and unscalable, rising to buttresses of dark, iron-hued rock. And to the east circled the rows of cliff bench, gray and old and fringed, splitting at the top in the notch where the lacy, slumberous waterfall, like white smoke, fell and vanished, to reappear in wider sheet of lace, only to fall and vanish again in the green depths.

"Paradise Park!" whispered Bo to herself. A call from Dale disturbed their raptures. Turning they hobbled with eager but painful steps in the direction of a larger camp fire, situated to the right of the great rock that sheltered their lean-to. No hut or house showed there and none was needed. Hiding places and homes for a hundred hunters were there in the sections of caverned cliffs, split off in bygone ages from the mountain wall above. A few stately pines stood out from the rocks and a clump of silver spruce ran down to a brown brook.

This camp was only a step from the lean-to, round the corner of a huge rock, yet it had been out of sight. Here indeed was evidence of a hunter's home—pelts and skins and antlers; a neat pile of split firewood; a long ledge of rock, well sheltered and loaded with bags like a huge pantry shelf; packs and ropes and saddles; tools and weapons, and a platform of dry brush as shelter for a fire, round which hung on poles an assortment of utensils for camp.

"Hyar—you git!" shouted Dale, and he threw a stick at something. A bear cub scampered away in haste. He was small and woolly and brown, and he grunted as he ran. Soon he halted.

"That's Bud," said Dale as the girls came up. "Guess he near starved in my absence. An' now he wants everythin', especially the sugar. We don't have sugar often up here."

"Isn't he dear? Oh, I love him!" cried Bo. "Come back, Bud. Come, Buddie."

The cub, however, kept his distance, watching Dale with bright little eyes.

"Where's Mr. Roy?" asked Helen.

"Roy's gone. He was sorry not to say good-by. But it's important he gets down in the pines on Anson's trail. He'll hang to Anson, an' in case they get near Pine he'll ride in to see where your uncle is."

"What do you expect?" questioned Helen gravely.

"Most anythin'," he replied. "Al, I reckon, knows now. Maybe he's rustlin' into the mountains by this time. If he meets up with Anson, well an' good, for Roy won't be far off. An' sure, if he runs across Roy, why they'll soon be here. But if I were you I wouldn't count on seein' your uncle very soon. I'm sorry. I've done my best. It sure is a bad deal."

"Don't think me ungracious," replied Helen hastily. How plainly he had intimated that it must be privation and annoyance for her to be compelled to accept his hospitality! "You are good—kind. I owe you much. I'll be eternally grateful."

Dale straightened as he looked at her. His glance was intent, piercing. He seemed to be receiving a strange or unusual portent. No need for him to say he had never before been spoken to like that!

"You may have to stay here with me—for weeks—maybe months if we've the bad luck to get snowed in," he said slowly, as if startled at this deduction. "You're safe here. No sheep thief could ever find this camp. I'll take risks to get you safe into Al's hands. But I'm goin' to be pretty sure about what I'm doin'. . . . So—there's plenty to eat an' it's a pretty place."

"Pretty! Why, its grand," exclaimed Bo. "I've called it Paradise Park."

"Paradise Park," he repeated, weighing the words. "You've named it, an' also the creek. Paradise Creek! I've been here twelve years with no fit name for my home till you said that."

"Oh, that pleases me," returned Bo with shining eyes.

"Eat now," said Dale. "An' I reckon you'll like that turkey."

There was a clean tarpaulin, upon which were spread steaming, fragrant pans—roast turkey, hot biscuits and gravy, mashed potatoes as white as if prepared at home, stewed dried apples, and butter and coffee. This bounteous repast surprised and delighted the girls; and when they had once tasted the roast wild turkey Milt Dale had occasion to blush at their encomiums.

"I hope Uncle Al doesn't come for a month," declared Bo as she tried to get her breath. There was a brown spot on her nose and one on each cheek.

Dale laughed. It was pleasant to hear him, for his laugh seemed unused and deep, as if it came from tranquil depths.

"Won't you eat with us?" asked Helen. "Reckon I will," he said. "It'll save time, an' hot grub tastes better."

Quite an interval of silence ensued, which presently was broken by Dale.

"Here comes Tom."

Helen observed with a thrill that the cougar was magnificent, seen erect on all fours, approaching with slow, sinuous grace. His color was tawny, with spots of whitish gray. He had bowlegs, big and round and furry, and a huge head with great tawny eyes. No matter how tame he was said to be, he looked wild. Like a dog he walked right up, and it so happened that he was directly behind Bo, within reach of her when she turned.

"Oh, my!" cried Bo, and up went both of her hands, in one of which was a huge piece of turkey. Tom took it, not viciously, but nevertheless with a snap that made Helen jump. As if by magic the turkey vanished. And Tom took a step closer to Bo. Her expression of fright changed to consternation.

"He stole my turkey."

"Tom, come here," ordered Dale sharply. The cougar glided round rather sheepishly. "Now lie down an' behave."

Tom crouched on all fours, his head resting on his paws, with his beautiful tawny eyes, light and piercing, fixed upon the hunter.

"Don't grab," said Dale, holding out a piece of turkey. Whereupon Tom took it less voraciously.

As it happened, the little bear cub saw this transaction, and he plainly indicated his opinion of the preference showed to Tom.

"Oh, the dear!" exclaimed Bo. "He means it's not fair. . . . Come, Bud—come on."

But Bud would not approach the group until called by Dale. Then he scrambled to them with every manifestation of delight. Bo almost forgot her own needs in feeding him and getting acquainted with him. Tom plainly showed his jealousy of Bud, and Bud likewise showed his fear of the great cat.

Helen could not believe the evidence of her eyes—that she was in the woods calmly and hungrily partaking of sweet, wild-flavored meat; that a full-grown mountain lion lay on one side of her and a baby brown bear sat on the other; that a strange hunter, a man of the forest, there in his lonely and isolated fastness, appealed to the romance in her and interested her as no one else she had ever met.

When the wonderful meal was at last finished Bo enticed the bear cub round to the camp of the girls and there soon became great comrades with him. Helen, watching Bo play, was inclined to envy her. No matter where Bo was placed she always got something out of it. Helen was a thinker. One reason she had desired to make her home in the West was that by taking up a life of action, in the open, she might think and dream and brood less. But here she was in the wild West, after three of the most strenuously active days of her career, and still the same old giant revolved her mind and turned it upon herself and upon all she saw there.

"What can I do?" she asked Bo almost helplessly.

"Why rest, you silly!" retorted Bo. "You walk like an old crippled woman with only one leg."

The advice was sound. The blankets spread out on the grass looked inviting and they felt comfortably warm in the sunshine. The breeze was slow, languorous, fragrant,

and it brought the low hum of the murmuring waterfall, like a melody of bees. Helen made a pillow and lay down to rest. Her gaze went wonderingly to the lofty fringed rim of the great amphitheater, and as she studied it she began to grasp its remoteness, how far away it was in the rarefied atmosphere. A black eagle, sweeping along, looked of tiny size, and yet he was far under the heights above. Drowsy fancy lulled her to sleep.

Helen slept all afternoon, and upon awakening toward sunset found Bo curled beside her. Dale had thoughtfully covered them with a blanket; also he had built a camp fire. The air was growing keen and cold.

Later, when they had put their coats on and made comfortable seats beside the fire, Dale came over, apparently to visit them.

"I reckon you can't sleep all the time," he said. "An' bein' city girls you'll get lonesome. It's natural you'd find time drag up here, bein' used to lots of people, an' goin's on, an' work, an' all girls like."

"I'd never be lonesome here," replied Helen with her direct force.

Dale did not betray surprise, but he showed that his mistake was something to ponder over. "Excuse me," he said presently as his gray eyes held hers. "That's how I had it. As I remember girls, most of them would die of lonesomeness up here." Then he addressed himself to Bo: "How about you? You see I figured you'd be the one that liked it an' your sister the one who wouldn't."

"I won't get lonesome very soon," replied Bo.

"I'm glad. It worried me some—not ever havin' girls as company before. An' in a day or so, when you're rested, I'll help you pass the time."

Bo's eyes were full of flashing interest, and Helen asked him "How?"

It was a sincere expression of her curiosity and not the doubtful or ironic challenge of an educated woman to a man of the forest. But as a challenge he took it.

"How?" he repeated, and a strange smile flitted across his face. "Why, by givin' you rides an' climbs to beautiful places. An' then, if you're interested, to show you how little so-called civilized people know of Nature."

Helen realized then that whatever his calling, hunter or wanderer or hermit, he was not uneducated, even if he appeared illiterate.

"I'll be happy to learn from you," she said.

"Me too!" chimed in Bo. "You can't tell too much to anyone from Missouri."

He smiled, and that warmed Helen to him, for then he seemed less removed from other people. About this hunter there began to be something of the very nature of which he spoke—a stillness, aloofness, an unbreakable tranquillity, a cold clear spirit like that in the mountain air, a physical something not unlike the tamed wildness of his pets or the strength of the pines.

"I'll bet I can tell you more'n you'll ever remember," he said.

"What'll you bet," retorted Bo.

"Well, more roast turkey against—say somethin' nice when you're safe an' home to your Uncle Al's, runnin' his ranch."

"Agreed. Nell, you hear?"

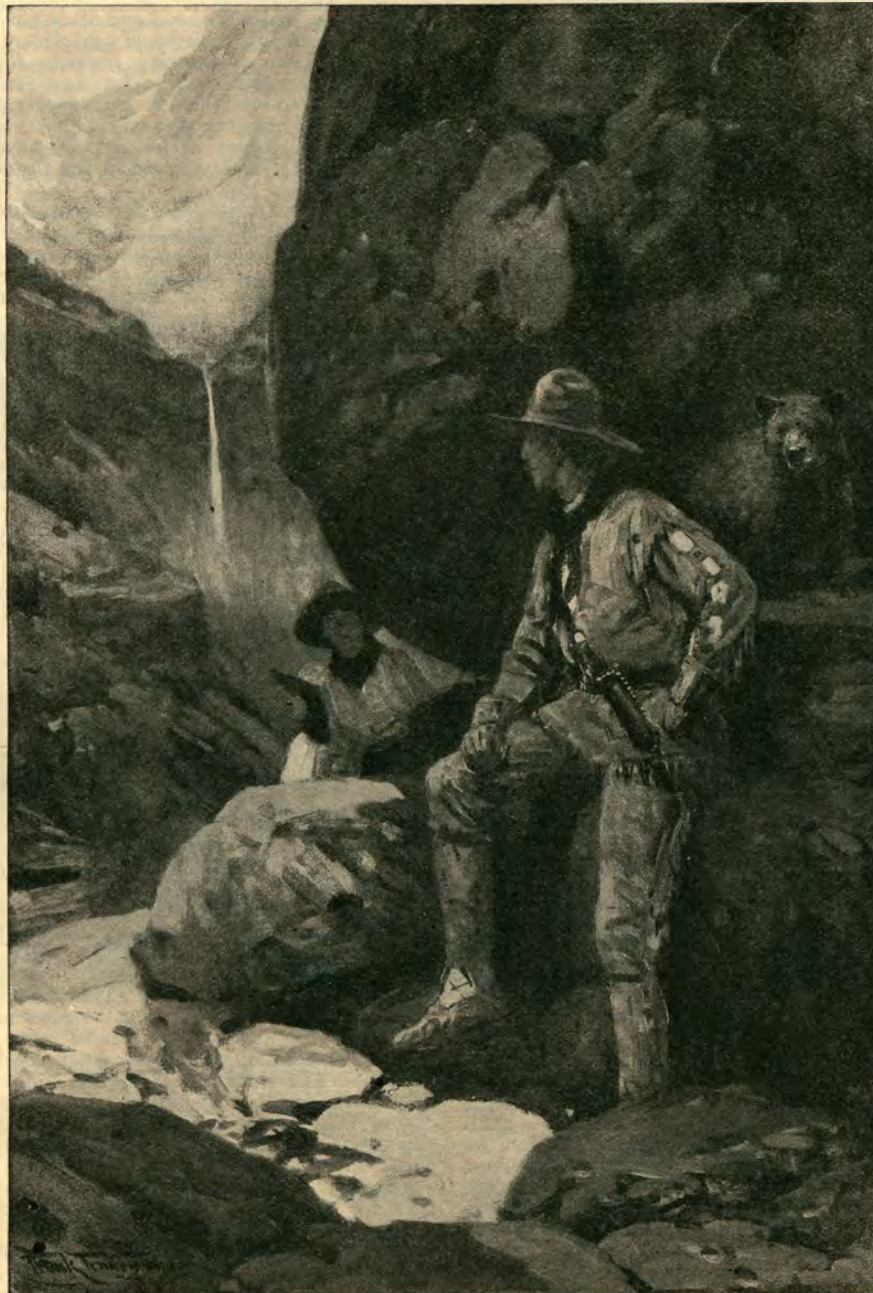
Helen nodded her head.

"All right. We'll leave it to Nell," began Dale, half seriously. "First, for the fun of passin' time we'll ride an' race my horses out in the park. An' we'll fish in the brooks an' hunt in the woods. There's an old silver-tip round that you can see me kill. An' we'll climb to the peaks an' see wonderful sights. . . . So much for that."

"You'll see how this park lies in the crater of a volcano an' was once full of water—an' how the snow blows in on one side in winter, a hundred feet deep, when there's none on the other. An' the trees—how they grow an' live an' fight one another an' depend on one another, an' protect the forest from storm winds. An' how they hold the water that is the fountains of the great rivers. An' how the creatures an' things that live in them or on them are good for them, an' neither could live without the other."

"An' then I'll show you my pets, tame an' untamed, an' tell you how it's man that makes any creature wild—how easy they are to tame an' how they learn to love you. An' there's the life of the forest, the strife of it—how the bear lives, an' the cats, an' the wolves, an' the deer. You'll see how cruel Nature is—how savage an' wild the

(Continued on Page 47)



"Paradise Park!" Whispered Bo to Herself

The Man of the Forest

(Continued from Page 23)

wolf or cougar tears down the deer; how a wolf loves fresh hot blood an' how a cougar unrolls the skin of a deer back from his neck. An' you'll see that this cruelty of Nature—this work of the wolf an' cougar—is what makes the deer so beautiful an' healthy an' swift an' sensitive. Without his deadly foes the deer would deteriorate an' die out.

"An' you'll see how this principle works out among all creatures of the forest. Strife! It's the meanin' of all creation an' the salvation. If you're quick to see you'll learn that the nature here in the wilds is the same as that of men—only men are no longer cannibals. Trees fight to live; birds fight; animals fight; men fight. They all live off one another. An' it's this fightin' that brings them all closer an' closer to bein' perfect. But nothin' will ever be perfect."

"But how about religion?" interrupted Helen earnestly.

"My religion, maybe, is love of life—wild life as it was in the beginnin', an' the wind that blows secrets from everywhere, an' the water that sings all day an' night, an' the stars that shine constant, an' the trees that speak somehow, an' the rocks that aren't dead. I'm never alone here or on the trails. There's somethin' unseen, but always with me. Call it God if you like."

"Oh, what you say is wonderful!" exclaimed Helen. He had struck deep into her soul.

Then ensued a little interval of silence. "Milt Dale, I lose the bet," declared Bo, with earnestness behind her frivolity.

"I'd forgotten that. Reckon I talked a lot," he said apologetically. "You see I don't get much chance to talk, except to myself or Tom. Years ago when I found the habit of silence settlin' down on me I took to thinkin' out loud an' talkin' to anythin'."

"I could listen to you all night," returned Bo dreamily.

"Do you read—do you have books?" inquired Helen suddenly.

"Yes, I read tolerable well—a good deal better than I talk or write," he replied. "I went to school till I was fifteen. Always hated study, but liked to read. Years ago an old friend of mine down here at Pine—Widow Cass—she gave me a lot of old books. An' I packed them up here. Winter's the time I read."

Conversation lagged after that, except for desultory remarks; and presently Dale bade the girls good-night and left them.

Helen watched his tall form vanish in the gloom under the pines, and after he had disappeared she still stared.

"Nell!" called Bo shrilly. "I've called you three times. I want to go to bed."

"Oh! I—I was thinking," rejoined Helen, half embarrassed, half wondering at herself. "I didn't hear you."

"I should smile you didn't," retorted Bo. "Wish you could just have seen your eyes. Nell, do you want me to tell you something?"

"Why—yes," said Helen rather feebly. She did not at all, when Bo talked like that.

"You're going to fall in love with that wild hunter," declared Bo in a voice that rang like a bell.

Helen was not only amazed but enraged. She caught her breath, preparatory to giving this incorrigible sister a piece of her mind. Bo went calmly on: "I can feel it in my bones."

"Bo, you're a little fool—a sentimental, romancing, gushy little fool!" retorted Helen. "All you seem to hold in your head is some rot about love. To hear you talk one would think there's nothing else in the world but love."

Bo's eyes were bright, shrewd, affectionate and laughing as she bent their steady gaze upon Helen. "Nell, that's just it. There is nothing else!"

X

AFTER a few days of riding the grassy level of that wonderfully gold and purple park, and dreamily listening by day to the ever low and ever changing murmur of the waterfall, and by night to the wild, lonely mourn of a hunting wolf, and climbing to the dizzy heights where

the wind stung sweetly, Helen Rayner lost track of time and forgot her peril.

Roy Beeman did not return. If occasionally Dale mentioned Roy and his quest, the girls had little to say beyond a recurrent anxiety for the old uncle, and then they forgot again.

Bo took at once to the wild life—to the horses and rides; to the camp work, for the girls had insisted on doing their share; to the many pets, and especially to the cougar Tom. The big cat followed her everywhere, played with her, rolling and pawing, kitten-like, and he would lay his massive head in her lap to purr his content. Bo had little fear of anything, and here in the wilds she soon lost that.

One of Dale's pets was a half-grown black bear named Muss. He was abnormally jealous of little Bud and he had a well-developed hatred of Tom; otherwise he was a very good-tempered bear and enjoyed Dale's impartial regard. Tom, however, chased Muss out of camp whenever Dale's back was turned, and sometimes Muss stayed away, shifting for himself. With the advent of Bo, who spent a good deal of time on the animals, Muss manifestly found the camp more attractive. Whereupon Dale predicted trouble between Tom and Muss.

Bo liked nothing better than a rough-and-tumble frolic with the black bear. Muss was not very big nor very heavy; and in a wrestling bout with the strong and wiry girl he sometimes came out second best. It spoke well of him that he seemed to be careful not to hurt Bo. He never bit or scratched, though he sometimes gave her sounding slaps with his paws. Whereupon Bo would clench her gauntleted fists and sail into him in earnest.

One afternoon, before the early supper they always had, Dale and Helen were watching Bo teasing the bear. She was in her most vixenish mood, full of life and fight. Tom lay all his long length on the grass, watching with narrow, gleaming eyes.

When Bo and Muss locked in an embrace and went down to roll over and over Dale called Helen's attention to the cougar.

"Tom's jealous. It's strange how animals are like people. Pretty soon I'll have to corral Muss or there'll be a fight."

Helen could not see anything wrong with Tom except that he did not look playful.

During supper time both bear and cougar disappeared, though this was not remarked until afterward. Dale whistled and called, but the rival pets did not return. Next morning Tom was there, curled up snugly at the foot of Bo's bed, and when she arose he followed her round as usual. But Muss did not return.

The circumstance made Dale anxious. He left camp, taking Tom with him, and upon returning stated that he had followed Muss's track as far as possible and then had tried to put Tom on the trail, but the cougar would not or could not follow it. Dale said Tom never liked a bear trail anyway, cougars and bears being common enemies. So, whether by accident or design, Bo lost one of her playmates.

The hunter searched some of the slopes next day and even went up on one of the mountains. He did not discover any sign of Muss, but he said he had found something else.

"Do you girls want some real excitement?" he asked.

Helen smiled her acquiescence and Bo replied with one of her forceful speeches.

"Don't mind bein' good an' scared?" he went on.

"You can't scare me," bantered Bo. But Helen looked doubtful.

"Up in one of the parks I ran across one of my horses—a lame bay you haven't seen. Well, he had been killed by that old silver-tip I told you was hangin' round. Hadn't been dead over an hour. Blood was still runnin' an' only a little meat eaten. That bear heard me or saw me an' made off into the woods. But he'll come back to-night. I'm goin' up there, lay for him an' kill him. Reckon you'd better go, because I don't want to leave you here alone at night."

(TO BE CONTINUED)



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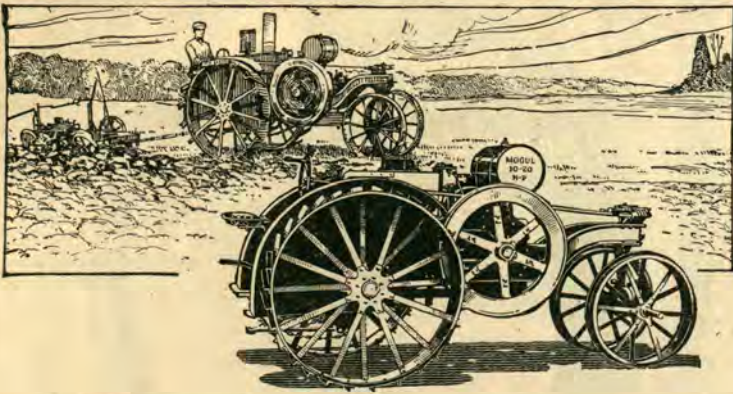
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Uncle Sam: Market News Reporter

EVERY little while someone gets off something new which causes the innocent bystander to ask, "Why wasn't this done before?" For example, the discovery has been made that the farmer who takes his fruit and vegetables to a city market, the grocer who buys in large lots, and the consumer who purchases by the quart, can all be helped by a quick system of market reports. It seems like an axiom, and perhaps it was not discovered before because there were too many axes to grind.

The scheme originated only a few months ago in Providence, Rhode Island, and has already been adopted in eight cities from the Eastern seaboard to the Rockies. It is said by conservatives to be yet in the experimental stage, but it is no more experimental than a headlight on an automobile. All concerned except the crooked are interested in the service. To the statement that the field has been covered by other agencies the reply is made that the covering has been altogether too much in spots and too unsatisfactory.

The Federal Department of Agriculture is coöperating with local forces in the market news service, and it is a real coöperation whereby the Department's Office of Markets details a man in each city to handle the work. No doubt it is a big feature to have such an official on the ground, for he tends to possess the confidence of sellers and buyers. He is an authoritative umpire and not an agent of private interest. Moreover he is pledged to get up considerably before day-break in order to collate the early morning news so that farmer and grocer have a just basis to start trading, and at all times he is supposed to turn on the tap of information for any who apply. He works fifteen hours a day and earns his salary, which is jointly paid by the Department of Agriculture and the municipal authorities where there is a city market or, otherwise, by the local association of truck growers.

Something for Mr. U. Consumer

While the system caters primarily to farmers and large buyers, Mr. Ultimate Consumer gets a nice rake-off of information in his local newspaper. He learns on authority that turnips are the best buy, and that now is the psychological moment for pickling pears, and that next week will be a favorable time for making sauerkraut. Leaving nothing to chance, the daily bulletin informs Mrs. Consumer how to cook and serve the dominant vegetable, whether to fry it in batter or to sear it with a substitute for olive oil, to force it through a colander or stamp it into arabesque effects.

Speaking from the standpoint of the national digestion it almost seems as if the advice on cooking is more important than the news on prices, especially in these days of food conservation. At least some of the cooking directions are admirably up-to-date in their emphasis laid on the saving of vegetable juices and other parts that were once thrown away. The question arises how any super reporter of market news, though he work fifteen hours a day, can also write these inspiring recipes. It must be a gift.

Horace W. Tinkham, of the Providence Market Gardeners' Association, is credited as the originator of the market news system. Within a very few months, not to say weeks, the system has been extended by the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Markets to these cities: Boston and Springfield, Massachusetts; Albany, New York; Cleveland, Ohio; Grand Rapids, Michigan; St. Paul, Minnesota, and Denver, Colorado. I was told in Washington that the system would not be extended farther this year. It takes time, effort and men to get the thing going, and the Bureau feels that it has made something of a record in such a wide extension of work within a short time.

Information by Wire

An important little detail of the local news service is the fact that any truck grower can get up-to-the-minute market news by telephoning to the market agent or by telegraphing if he will pay the cost of reply. Ordinarily it is supposed that the farmer will obtain his information from the daily reports published in the local newspapers, but when he wants the very latest news he can get it hot off the wire. A truckload of vegetables these days may be worth three hundred dollars or more, and a little information over the wire may add many simoleons to the grower's receipts. When the system becomes more generally established the feature of quick information will be still more valuable, especially in sections where two or more markets are accessible to the growers. In such cases there will be profit for the growers and a better distribution of produce between markets.

An increased average return on crops is attributed to the market news system, according to this statement made by the Bureau of Markets:

"This does not mean that prices are generally increased to the dealer, but rather that a fair and steady price is maintained. The grower finds an outlet for his entire crop, so that he is able to sell it for at least the cost of harvesting and marketing instead of being forced to let it go to waste.

"Retail dealers benefit by the system, since a demand is created for a greater volume of products. Women's clubs, canning clubs and individuals desirous of fresh fruits and vegetables know when and where to secure their supplies most advantageously.

"A Providence grocer doing a large business has practically doubled his sales of spinach this season. Formerly he had to figure on throwing away between twenty-five and fifty per cent of the spinach which he had bought and paid for, simply because sales were slow and the produce deteriorated. Members of the Providence Market Gardeners' Association declare that the staving off of a glut of spinach on two succeeding days saved them more than their share of the salary of the agent for the entire season. It is a conservative estimate that between \$500 and \$1000 a day is being saved the consumers of Providence on home-grown fruits and vegetables."

JOHN R. MCMAHON.

Table of Contents for November 24, 1917

	PAGE		PAGE
Cattle in the Far West—By George Frederic Stratton	3	Brussels Sprouts From the Gulf Coast—By John W. Wilkinson	30
The Only Substitute for Sugar—By John W. Love	5	Preparing the Turkeys for Market—By D. E. Warner	32
Keeping Leather in Condition—By S. Orrick	6	Crate-Fattening Poultry—By Frank E. Mussehl	33
The Farmer's Share of Retail Prices—By L. D. H. Weld	6	To Manage Breeding Ducks—By Maurice H. Decker	33
The Best of Hams and Bacon—By T. G. Paterson	8	Bridge Grafting Wounded Trees—By Hugh Findlay	34
Is an Orange Grove a Lemon?—By John B. Wallace	10	The Market Garden	35
The Crop That's All Velvet—By Harry Snowden	12	Talks to Young Trappers—By George J. Thiessen	36
Stabler	12	Handy Farm Mechanics	37
Lime Sweetens Sour Soils—By C. A. LeClair	13	Soy Succotash for Hogs—By A. T. Morison	38
It Cost More to Grow Corn This Year—By Harry R. O'Brien	14	The Home Garden	42
The Editors' Page	16	A House for Ice and Milk—By R. C. Miller	45
Women Road Agents—By Thomas J. Murphy	17	Hildebrand, Master Landlord—By George H. Dacy	46
What's Under the Fleece? (Pictures)	18	Chaff	48
Blue Ribbon Men and Women (Pictures)	19	Pine Log War-Time Problems—By Corra Harris	49
The Field of Vision—By Alice Garland Steele	20	Our Club Diary—By Maud C. Hessler	50
The Man of the Forest—By Zane Grey	22	A Window Garden—By E. A. Cassavant	51
Uncle Sam Takes Stock—By Forrest Crissey	24	Uncle Sam: Market News Reporter—By John R. McMahon	52
Balancing Hogs Against Corn—By C. E. Gopen	28		