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From a Photograph by J. H. Field

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Either they could be leased to stockmen, or if desirable they could be turned over to homesteaders in tracts of sufficient size so they might reasonably expect to make a decent living thereon.

Probably no asset of the Federal Government has been disposed of in a more careless manner than its public lands, and Congress is to blame. The reckless waste of such resources may have seemed all right when it looked as if we were destined to supply the world with wool and meat; but now that famine stares us in the face, is it not time to call a halt and dispose of our remaining land so that it may be made to return the greatest good to the nation? Only such a disposition will save the sheep industry in the West.

What is the future of the sheep industry in the farm states? All reliable opinion indicates a decline in farm-sheep numbers during the past few years. Sections in some states have entirely given up their sheep, and farmers who now have sheep are disposed to sell because prices are high. In spite of the fact that for five years agricultural institutions have been urging more sheep on the farm, the decline still continues. Possibly the farmer knows his business better than his advisers do.

At the present time the dog is held accountable for the diminishing farm flock, but it is my judgment that the dairy cow is the real offender. Dairying has been developing very rapidly in this country, and most of the development has been at the expense of the sheep. Men who had flocks of sheep put in a few dairy cows. These returned a check every month. As dairy products advanced in price

and means of transporting them increased, more cows were added. Something had to go, and as the flock had dwindled to a point where it was a side line, it was eliminated. As the dairy demanded more and more attention the sheep received less and less; and just as soon as sheep fail to receive constant attention they cease to be a thing of profit or beauty on any farm.

The campaign for more sheep on the farm has been misguided. Here are the slogans used:

"We ought to have twenty-five sheep on every farm."

"A small flock of sheep on the farm will not eat anything and will require no care."

"Sheep live on weeds and trash round the fence corners."

"If you keep sheep, dogs will kill them."

Any farmer with sense enough to keep any kind of livestock recognizes such talk as this as unreliable. We have about 6,000,000 farms. Twenty-five head on each would give us 150,000,000 sheep. Under such conditions neither mutton nor wool would be worth anything.

Aside from this phase of the subject probably not more than half our farms are adapted to rearing sheep, as many are low, swampy, too hot, or too close to cities. Of the remaining farms many are already devoted to some other purposes. A dairyman or a gardener would hardly want to bother with sheep.

The last census showed sheep on 609,000 farms. If these 609,000 farms gave the sheep the care they deserve and kept a sufficient number to justify that care, there would be no excuse for another farmer's going into sheep.

"A small flock of sheep on the farm will not eat anything and will require no care." The farmer who is going into sheep and is not prepared to give them more care than any other class of livestock requires would better invest his money elsewhere. Since the dawn of civilization the sheep has been trained to depend upon man for his protection and he has learned his lesson well. Do you know why more than sixty per cent of the sheep in the United States are in the twelve Western "Public Land" States? Morning, noon and night the shepherd stands guard over his flock in those states, and in no other state is that done.

Every farmer should be prepared to feed his sheep grain and good hay throughout the winter, just as he feeds his best horse; and every night in the year the sheep should be fastened in a small vermin-proof inclosure; this is necessary regardless of dog laws. Then the farm must be fenced sheep-tight—not a difficult problem.

The only way to figure the sheep-feed problem is that about seven sheep can be kept on the grass and forage required for one cow. "Sheep live on weeds and trash round the fence corners." Yes, many of them do, and that is one of the reasons why the farmer quits sheep. The sheep that is kept as a scavenger is an object of sympathy. Sheep will eat weeds, but they will not live on weeds.

Not long ago the writer saw in Kansas City yards a small flock of sheep that had been used as scavengers. They were poor and dirty, with wool pulled off their sides, and every square inch of their bodies was covered with burs.

(Concluded on Page 1052)

WILDFIRE

By ZANE GREY

Author of "Riders of the Purple Sage," "The Lone Star Ranger," etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK TENNEY JOHNSON

XI

IN A FLASH Lucy leaped off the King. She ran to the prostrate man—dropped to her knees.

"Oh!" she cried. His face was ghastly. "Oh! are you—you badly hurt?"

"Lift me—my head," he said faintly.

She raised his head. What strained, passionate, terrible gaze he bent upon the horses!

"Boy, they're mine—the black an' the red!" he cried.

"They surely must be," replied Lucy. "Oh, tell me, are you hurt?"

"Boy! Did you catch them—fetch them back—lookin' for me?"

"I sure did."

"You caught—that red devil—an' fetched him—back to me!" went on the wondering, faint voice. "Boy—oh—boy!"

He lifted a long, ragged arm and pulled Lucy down. The action amazed her equally as his passion of gratitude. He might have been injured, but he had an arm of iron. Lucy was powerless. She felt her face against his—and her breast against his. The pound of his heart was like blows. The first instant she wanted to laugh, despite her pity. Then the powerful arm—the contact affected her as nothing ever before.

Suppose this crippled rider had taken her for a boy. She was not a boy! She could not help being herself. And no man had ever put a hand on her. Consciousness of this brought shame and anger. She struggled so violently that she freed herself. And he lay back.

"See here—that's no way to act—to hug a—a person," she cried with flaming cheeks.

"Boy, I —"

"I'm not a boy. I'm a girl."

"What!"

Lucy tore off her sombrero, which had been pulled far forward. This revealed her face fully, and her hair came tumbling down. The rider gazed, stupefied. Then a faint tinge of red colored his ghastly cheeks.

"A girl! . . . Why—why 'scuse me, miss. I—I took you—for a boy."

He seemed so astounded, he looked so ashamed, so scared, and withal so haggard and weak, that Lucy immediately recovered her equanimity.

"Sure I'm a girl. But that's no matter. . . . You've been thrown. Are you hurt?"

He smiled a weak assent.

"Badly?" she queried. She did not like the way he lay—so limp—so motionless.

"I'm afraid so. I can't move."

"Oh! . . . What shall I do?"

"Can you—get me water?" he whispered with dry lips.

Lucy flew to her horse to get the small canteen she always carried. But that had been left on her saddle and she had ridden Van's. Then she gazed round. The wash she had crossed several times ran near where the rider lay. Green grass and willows bordered it. She ran down and, hurrying along, searched for water. There was water in places, yet she had to go a long way before she found water

that was drinkable. Filling her sombrero she hurried back to the side of the rider. It was difficult to give him a drink.

"Thanks, miss," he said gratefully. His voice was stronger and less hoarse.

"Have you any broken bones?" asked Lucy.

"I don't know. I can't feel much."

"Are you in pain?"

"Hardly. I feel sort of thick."

Lucy, being an intelligent girl, born in the desert and used to its needs, had not often encountered a situation with which she was unable to cope.

"Let me feel if you have any broken bones. . . . That arm isn't broken, I'm positive."

The rider smiled faintly again. How he stared with his strained, dark eyes! His face showed ghastly through the thin soft beard and the tan.

Lucy found that his right arm was badly bruised, but not broken. She made sure his collar bones and shoulder blades were intact. Broken ribs were harder to locate; still, as he did not feel pain from pressure she concluded there were no fractures there. With her assistance he moved his legs, proving no broken bones there.

"I'm afraid it's my—spine," he said.

"But you raised your head once," she replied. "If your back was—was broken or injured you couldn't raise your head."

"So I couldn't. I guess I'm just knocked out. I was—pretty weak before Wildfire knocked me—off Nagger."

"Wildfire?"

"That's the red stallion's name."

"Oh, he's named already?"

"I named him—long ago. He's known on many a range."

"Where?"

"I think far north of here. I—trailed him—days—weeks—months. We crossed the great cañon —"

"The Grand Cañon?"

"It must be that."

"The Grand Cañon is down there," said Lucy, pointing.

"I live on it. . . . You've come a long way."

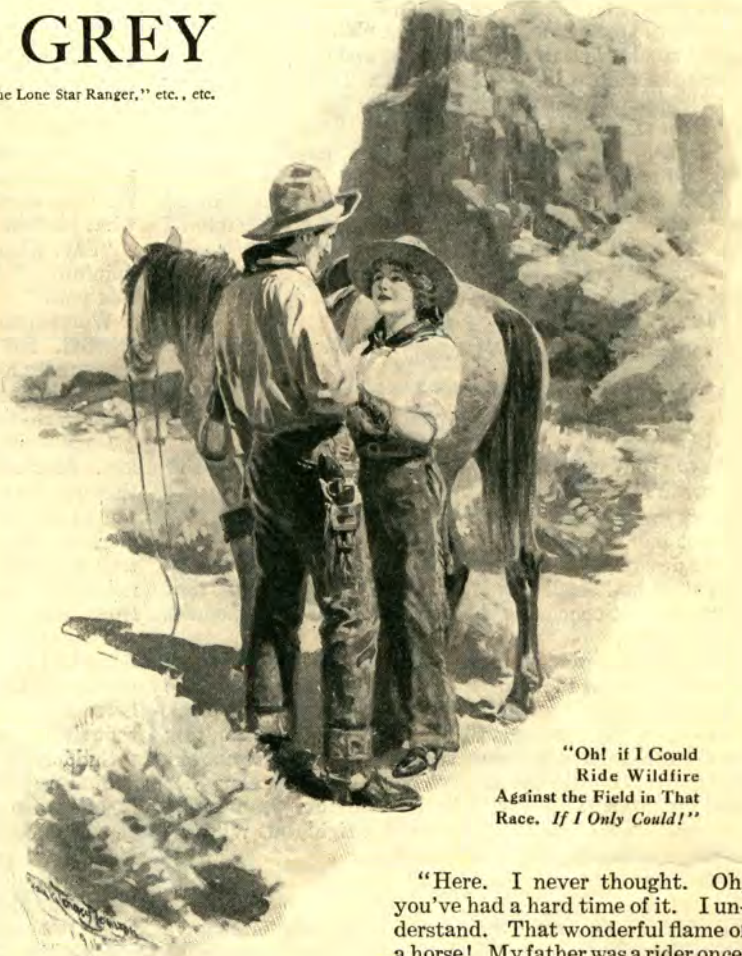
"Hundreds of miles! . . . Oh, the ground I covered—that awful cañon country! . . . But I stayed with Wildfire. An' I put a rope on him. An' he got away. . . . An' it was a boy—no, a girl—who saved him for me—an' maybe saved my life too!"

Lucy looked away from the dark, staring eyes. A light in them confused her.

"Never mind me. You say you were weak? Have you been ill?"

"No, miss. Just starved. . . . I starved on Wildfire's trail."

Lucy ran to her saddle and got biscuits out of the pockets of her coat.



"Oh! if I Could Ride Wildfire Against the Field in That Race. If I Only Could!"

"Here. I never thought. Oh, you've had a hard time of it. I understand. That wonderful flame of a horse! My father was a rider once. Bostil. Did you ever hear of him?"

"Bostil. The name—I've heard." Then the rider lay thinking, as he munched a biscuit. "Yes, I remember, but it was long ago. I spent a night with a wagon train, a camp of many men and women, religious people, working into Utah. Bostil had a boat at the Crossing of the Fathers."

"Yes, they called the ferry that."

"I remember well now. They said Bostil couldn't count his horses. That he was a rich man, hard on riders. An' that he'd used a gun, more than once."

Lucy bowed her head.

"Yes, that's my dad."

The rider did not seem to see how he had hurt her.

"Here we are talking—wasting time," she said. "I must start home. You can't be moved. What shall I do?"

"That's for you to say, Bostil's daughter."

"My name's Lucy," replied the girl, blushing painfully. "I mean I'll be glad to do anything you think best."

"You're very good."

Then he turned his face away. Lucy looked closely at him. He was indeed a beggared rider. His clothes and his boots hung in tatters. He had no hat—no coat—no vest. His gaunt face bore traces of what might have been a fine, strong comeliness, but now it was only thin, worn, wan, pitiful, with that look which always went to a woman's heart. He had the look of a homeless rider.

Lucy had seen a few of his wandering type, and his story was plain. But he seemed to have a touch of pride, and this quickened her interest.

"Then I'll do what I think best for you," said Lucy.

First she unsaddled the black Nagger. With the saddle she made a pillow for the rider's head, and she covered him with the saddle blanket. Before she had finished this task he turned his eyes upon her. And Lucy felt she would be haunted. Was he badly hurt, after all? It seemed probable. How strange he was!

"I'll water the horses—then tie Wildfire here on a double rope. There's grass."

"But you can't lead him," replied the rider.

"He'll follow me."

"That red devil!" The rider shuddered as he spoke. Lucy had some faint inkling of what a terrible fight it had been between man and horse.

"Yes, when I found him he was broken. Look at him now."

But the rider did not appear to want to see the stallion. He gazed up at Lucy, and she saw something in his eyes that made her think of a child. She left him, had no trouble in watering the horses, and haltered Wildfire among the willows on a patch of grass. Then she returned.

"I'll go now," she said to the rider.

"Where?"

"Home. I'll come back tomorrow, early, and bring someone to help you —"

"Girl, if you want to help me more bring me some bread an' meat. Don't tell anyone. Look what a ragamuffin I am. . . . An' there's Wildfire. I don't want him seen till I'm—on my feet again. I know riders. . . . That's all. If you want to be so good—come."

"I'll come," replied Lucy simply.

"Thank you. I owe you—a lot. . . . What did you say your name was?"

"Lucy. Lucy Bostil."

"Oh, I forgot. . . . Are you sure you tied Wildfire good an' tight?"

"Yes, I'm sure. I'll go now. I hope you'll be better tomorrow."

Lucy hesitated, with her hand on the King's bridle. She did not like to leave this young man lying there helpless on the desert. But what else could she do? What a strange adventure had befallen her! At the following thought that it was not yet concluded she felt a little stir of excitement at her pulses.

She was so strangely preoccupied that she forgot it was necessary for her to have a step to mount Sage King. She realized it quickly enough when she attempted it. Then she led him off in the sage till she found a rock. Mounting she turned him straight across country, meaning to cut out miles of travel that would have been necessary along her back trail. Once she looked back. The rider was not visible; the black horse Nagger was out of sight, but Wildfire, blazing in the sun, watched her depart.

XII

LUCY BOSTIL could not control the glow of strange excitement under which she labored, but she could put her mind on the riding of Sage King. She did not realize, however, that she was riding him under the stress and spell of that excitement.

She had headed out to make a short cut, fairly sure of her direction, yet she was not unaware of the fact that she would be lost till she ran across her trail. That might be easy to miss and time was flying. She put the King to a brisk trot, winding through the aisles of the sage.

Soon she had left the monument region and was down on the valley floor again. From time to time she conquered a desire to look back. Presently she was surprised and very glad to ride into a trail with the tracks she had made coming out. With much relief she turned Sage King into this trail, and the anxiety she had felt left her entirely.

But that did not mitigate her excitement. She eased the King into a long, swinging lope. And as he warmed to the work she roused with him. It was hard to hold him in, once he got out of a trot, and after miles and miles of this, when she thought best to slow down, he nearly pulled her arms off. Still she finally got him in hand.

Then followed miles of soft and rough going, which seemed long and tedious. Beyond that was the home stretch up the valley, the gradual slope of which could only be seen at a distance. Here was a straight, broad trail, not too soft nor too hard. For all the years she could remember riders had tried out and trained their favorites on that course.



Was He Badly Hurt, After All? It Seemed Probable. How Strange He Was!

Lucy reached down to assure herself that the cinch was tight, then she pulled her sombrero down hard, slacked the bridle and let the King go. He simply broke his gait, he was so surprised. Lucy saw him trying to look back at her, as if he could not make out that this young woman rider had given him a free rein. Perhaps one reason he disliked her had been always and everlastingly that tight rein. Like the wary horse he was he took to a canter, to try out what his new freedom meant.

"Say, what's the matter with you?" called Lucy disdainfully. "Are you lazy? Or don't you believe I can ride you?"

Whereupon she dug him with her spurs. Sage King snorted. His action marvelously shifted. Thunder rolled from under his hoofs. And he broke out of that clattering roar into his fleet stride, where his hoof beats were swift, regular, rhythmic.

Lucy rode him with teeth and fists clenched, bending low. After all, she thought, it was no trick to ride him. In that gait he was dangerous, for a fall meant death, but he ran so smoothly that riding him was easy, and certainly glorious. He went so fast that the wind blinded her. The trail was only a white streak in blurred gray. She could not get her breath; the wind seemed to whip the air away from her.

Then she felt the lessening of the tremendous pace. Sage King had run himself out and the miles were behind her. Gradually her sight became clear, and as the hot and wet horse slowed down, satisfied with his wild run, Lucy saw that she was up on the slope, only a few miles from home.

Suddenly she thought she saw something dark move behind a sagebush just ahead. Before she could move a hand at the bridle Sage King leaped with a frantic snort. It was a swerving, nimble, tremendous bound. He went high. Lucy was unseated, but somehow clung on, and came down with him, finding the saddle. And, it seemed, while in the air she saw a long, snaky, whipping loop of rope shoot out and close just where Sage King's legs had been.

She screamed. The horse broke and ran. Lucy, righting herself, looked back to see Joel Creech holding a limp lasso. He had tried to rope the King.

Lucy's father's blood roused. She thought of the horse—not of herself. If the King had not been so keen sighted, so swift, he would have gone down with a broken leg. Lucy never in her life had been so furious.

Joel shook his fist at her and yelled: "I'd got you—on any other hoss!"

She did not reply, though she had to fight herself to keep from pulling her gun and shooting at him. She guided the running horse back into the trail, rapidly leaving Creech out of sight.

"He's gone crazy, that's sure," said Lucy. "And he means me harm!"

She ran the King clear up to the corrals, and he was still going hard when she turned down the lane to the barns. Then she hauled him in.

Farlane was there to meet her. She saw no other riders and was glad.

"Wal, Miss Lucy, the King sure looks good," said Farlane as she jumped off and flung him the bridle. "He's just had about right, judgin' . . . Say, girl, you're all pale! Oh, say, you wasn't scared of the King now?"

"No," replied Lucy, panting.

"Wal, what's up, then?" The rider spoke in an entirely different voice, and into his clear hazel eyes a little, dark gleam shot.

"Joel Creech waylaid me out in the sage—and—and tried to catch me."

Lucy checked herself. It might not do to tell how Joel had tried to catch her.

"He did? An' you on the King!" Farlane laughed as if relieved. "Wal, he's tried thet before, Miss Lucy. But when you was up on the gray—thet shows Joel's crazy sure."

"He sure is. Farlane, I—I am mad."

"Wal, cool off, Miss Lucy. It ain't nothin' to git set up about. An' don't tell the old man."

"Why not?" demanded Lucy.

"Wal, because he's in a queer sort of bad mood lately. It wouldn't be safe. He hates them Creeches. So don't tell him."

"All right, Farlane, I won't. Don't you tell, either," replied Lucy soberly.

"Sure, I'll keep mum. But if Joel doesn't watch out I'll put a crimp in him myself."

Lucy hurried away down the lane and entered the house without meeting anyone. In her room she changed her clothes and lay down to rest and think.

Strangely, Lucy might never have encountered Joel Creech out in the sage, for all the thought she gave him. Her mind was busy round the crippled rider. Who was he? Where was he from? What strange passion he had shown over the recovery of that wonderful red horse!

Lucy could not forget the feel of his iron arm when he held her in a kind of frenzied gratitude. A wild upland rider, living only for a wild horse! How like Indians some of these riders! Yet this fellow had seemed different from most of the uncouth riders she had known. He spoke better. He appeared to have had some little schooling.

Lucy did not realize that she was interested in him. She thought she was sorry for him and interested in the stallion. She began to compare Wildfire with Sage King, and if she remembered rightly Wildfire, even in his disheveled state, had appeared a worthy rival of the King. What would Bostil say at sight of that flame-colored stallion? Lucy thrilled.

Later she left her room to see if the hour was opportune for her plan to make up a pack of supplies for the rider. Her aunt was busy in the kitchen and Bostil had not come in. Lucy took advantage of the moment to tie up a pack and carry it to her room.

Somehow the task pleased her. She recalled the lean face of the rider. And that brought back memory of his ragged appearance. Why not pack up an outfit of clothes? Bostil had a stock room full of such necessities for his men.

Warm-faced with the idea, Lucy hurried to Bostil's stock room, and with deft hands and swift judgment selected an outfit for the rider, even down to a comb and razor. All this she carried quickly to her room, where in her thoughtfulness she added a bit of glass from a broken mirror, and soap and a towel. Then she tied up a second pack.

Bostil did not come home to supper, a circumstance that made Lucy's aunt cross. They ate alone, and then waiting awhile were rather late in clearing away the table. After this Lucy had her chance in the dusk of early evening and she carried both packs way out into the sage and left them near the trail.

"Hope a coyote doesn't come along," she said. That possibility, however, did not worry her so much as getting those packs up on the King. How in the world would she ever do it?

She hurried back to the house, stealthily keeping to the shadow of the cottonwoods, for she would have faced an embarrassing situation if she had met her father, even had he been in a good humor. And she reached the sitting room unobserved. The lamps had been lighted and a log blazed on the hearth. She was reading when Bostil entered.

"Hello, Lucy," he said. He looked tired, and Lucy knew he had been drinking, because when he had been he never offered to kiss her. The strange, somber shade was still on his face, but it brightened somewhat at sight of her. Lucy greeted him as always.

"Farlane tells me you handled the King great—better'n Van has worked him lately," said Bostil. "But don't tell him I told you."

That was sweet praise from Farlane. "Oh, dad, it could hardly be true," expostulated Lucy. "Both you and Farlane are a little sore at Van now."

"I'm a lot sore," replied Bostil gruffly.

"Anyway, how did Farlane know how I handled Sage King?" queried Lucy.

"Wal, every hair on a hoss talks to Farlane, so Holley says. . . . Lucy, you take the King out every day for

awhile. Ride him now an' watch out! Joel Creech was in the village today. He sure sneaked when he seen me. He's up to some mischief."

Lucy did not want to lie and she did not know what to say. Presently Bostil bade her good night. Lucy endeavored to read, but her mind continually wandered back to the adventures of the day.

Next morning she had difficulty in concealing her impatience, but luck favored her. Bostil was not in evidence, and Farlane, for once, could spare no more time than it took to saddle Sage King. Lucy rode out into the sage pretty sure that no one watched her.

She had hidden the packs near the tallest bunch of greasewood along the trail; and when she halted behind it she had no fear of being seen from the corrals. She got the packs. The light one was not hard to tie back of the saddle, but the large one presented a different proposition. She decided to carry it in front. There was a good-sized rock near, upon which she stepped, leading Sage King alongside; and after an exceedingly trying moment she got up, holding the pack. For a wonder Sage King behaved well.

Then she started off, holding the pack across her lap, and she tried the King's several gaits to see which one would lend more comfortably to the task before her. The trouble was that Sage King had no slow gaits; even his walk was fast. And Lucy was compelled to hold him into that. She wanted to hurry, but that seemed out of the question. She tried to keep from gazing out toward the monuments because they were so far away.

How would she find the crippled rider? It flashed into her mind that she might find him dead, and that seemed horrible. But her common sense persuaded her that she would find him alive and better. The pack was hard to hold and Sage King fretted at the monotonous walk. The hours dragged. The sun grew hot. And it was almost noon when she reached the point where she cut off the trail to the left. Thereafter, with the monuments standing ever higher and the distance perceptibly lessening, the minutes passed less tediously.

At length she reached the zone of lofty rocks and found them different—how, she could not tell. She rode down among them, and was glad when she saw the huge mitens—her landmarks. At last she spied the green-bordered wash and the few cedar trees.

Then a horse blazed red against the sage and another shone black. That sight made Lucy thrill. She rode on, eager now, a little agitated and strange.

Before she got quite close to the cedars she saw a man. He took a few slow steps out of the shade. His back was bent. Lucy recognized the rider, and in her gladness to see him on his feet she cried out. Then, when King reached the spot, Lucy rolled the pack off to the ground.

"Oh, that was a job!" she cried.

The rider looked up with eyes that seemed keener, less staring than she remembered.

"You came? . . . I was afraid you wouldn't," he said.

"Sure I came. . . . You're better—not bad hurt," she said gravely. "I—I'm so glad."

"I've got a crimp in my back. That's all."

Lucy was quick to see that after the first glance at her he was all eyes for Sage King. She laughed. How like the rider! She watched him, knowing that presently he would realize what a horse she was riding. She slipped off and threw the bridle, and then, swiftly untying the second pack, she laid it down.

The rider, with slow, painful steps and bent back, approached Sage King and put a lean, strong, brown hand on him, and touched him as if he wished to feel if he were real. Then he whistled softly. When he turned to Lucy his eyes shone with a beautiful light.

"It's Sage King, Bostil's favorite," said Lucy.

"Sage King! . . . He looks it. . . . But never a wild horse?"

"No."

"A fine horse," replied the rider. "Of course he can run?" This last held a note of a rider's jealousy.

Lucy laughed. "Run! . . . The King is Bostil's favorite. He can run away from any horse in the uplands."

"I'll bet you Wildfire can beat him," replied the rider with a dark glance.

"Come on!" cried Lucy daringly.

Then the rider and girl looked more earnestly at each other. He smiled in a way that changed his face—brightened out the set hardness.

"I reckon I'll have to crawl," he said ruefully. "But maybe I can ride in a few days—if you'll come back again."

His remark brought to Lucy the idea that of course she would hardly see this rider again today. Even if he went to the Ford, which event was unlikely, he would not remain there long. The sensation of blankness puzzled her, and she felt an unfamiliar confusion.

"I—I've brought you—some things," she said, pointing to the larger pack.

"Grub, you mean?"

"No."

"That was all I asked you for, miss," he said somewhat stiffly.

"Yes, but—I—I thought —" Lucy became unaccountably embarrassed. Suppose this strange rider should be offended! "Your clothes were—so torn. . . . And no wonder you were thrown—in those boots! . . . So I thought I'd —"

"You thought I needed clothes as bad as grub," he said bitterly. "I reckon that's so."

His look, more than his tone, cut Lucy; and involuntarily she touched his arm.

"Oh! you won't refuse to take them—please don't!"

At her touch a warmth came into his face.

"Take them? I should smile I will."

He tried to reach down to lift the pack, but as it was obviously painful for him to bend Lucy intercepted him.

"But you've had no breakfast," she protested. "Why not eat before you open that pack?"

"Nope. I'm not hungry. . . . Maybe I'll eat a little after I dress up." He started to walk away, then turned.

"Miss Bostil, have you been so good to every wanderin' rider you happened to run across?"

"Good!" she exclaimed, flushing. She dropped her eyes before his. "Nonsense. . . . Anyway you're the first wandering rider I ever met—like this."

"Well, you're good," he replied with emotion. Then he walked away with slow, stiff steps and disappeared behind the willows in the little hollow.

Lucy uncoiled the rope on her saddle and halted Sage King on the best grass near at hand. Then she opened the

pack of supplies, thinking the while that she must not tarry here long.

"But on the King I can run back like the wind," she mused.

The pack contained dried fruits and meat and staples—also an assortment of good things to eat that were of a perishable nature, already much the worse for the long ride. She spread all these out in the shade of a cedar. The utensils were few—two cups, two pans, and a tiny pot. She gathered wood and arranged it for a fire, so that the rider could start it as soon as he came back. He seemed long in coming. Lucy waited, yet still he did not return.

Finally she thought of the red stallion, and started off down the wash to take a look at him. He was grazing. He had lost some of the dirt and dust and bedraggled appearance. When he caught sight of her he lifted his head high and whistled. How wild he looked! And his whistle was shrill, clear, strong. Both the other horses answered it. Lucy went on closer to Wildfire. She was fascinated now.

"If he doesn't know me!" she cried.

Never had she been so pleased. She expected every sign of savageness on his part and certainly had not intended to go near him. But Wildfire did not show fear or hate in his recognition.

Lucy went directly to him and got a hand on him. Wildfire reared a little and shook a little, but this disappeared presently under her touch. He held his head very high and watched her with wonderful eyes. Gradually she drew his head down. Standing before him she carefully and slowly changed the set of the hackamore that had made a welt on his nose.

It seemed to have been her good fortune that every significant move she had made round this stallion had been to mitigate his pain. Lucy believed he knew this as well as she knew it. Her theory, an often disputed one, was that horses were as intelligent as human beings, and had just the same fears, likes and dislikes. Lucy knew she was safe when she untied the lasso from the strong root where she had fastened it, and led the stallion down the wash to a pool of water. And she stood beside him with a hand on his shoulder while he bent his head to sniff at the water. He tasted it, plainly with disgust. It was stagnant water full of vermin. But finally he drank. Lucy led him up the wash to another likely place, and securely tied him.

When she got back to the camp in the cedars the rider was there, on his knees, kindling the fire. His clean-shaved face and new apparel made him vastly different. He was young, and had he not been so gaunt he would have been fine looking, Lucy thought.

"Wildfire remembered me," Lucy burst out. "He wasn't a bit scary. Let me handle him. Followed me to water."

"He's taken to you," replied the rider seriously. "I've heard of the like, but not so quick. Was he in a bad fix when you got to him yesterday?"

Lucy explained briefly.

"Aha! . . . If that red devil has any love in him I'll never get it. I wish I could have done as much for him. But always when he sees me he'll remember."

Lucy saw that the rider was in difficulties. He could not bend his back and evidently it pained him to try. His brow was moist.

"Let me do that," she said.

"Thanks. It took about all my strength to get into this new outfit," he said, relinquishing his place to Lucy.

When she looked up from her task presently he was sitting in the shade of the cedar, watching her. He had the expression of a man who hardly believed what he saw.

"Did you have any trouble gettin' away without tellin'—about me?" he asked.

"No. But I sure had a job with those packs," she replied.

"You must be a wonder with a horse."

As far as vanity was concerned Lucy had only one weakness—and he had touched upon it.

"Well, dad and Holley and Farlane argue much about me. Still, I guess they all agree I can ride."

"Holley an' Farlane are riders?" he questioned.

"Yes, dad's right-hand men."

"Your dad hires many riders, I suppose?"

"I never heard of him turning any rider down—at least not without a try."

"I wonder if he would give me a job?" Lucy glanced up quickly. The idea surprised her—pleased her.

"In a minute," she replied. "And he'd be grand to you. You see he'd have an eye for Wildfire."

(Continued on Page 1053)



While in the Air She Saw a Long, Snaky, Whipping Loop of Rope Shoot Out and Close Just Where Sage King's Legs Had Been

WILDFIRE

(Continued from Page 1019)

The rider nodded his head as if he understood how that would be.

"And of course you'd never sell or trade Wildfire?" went on Lucy.

The rider's smile was sad, but it was conclusive.

"Then you'd better stay away from Bostil," returned Lucy shortly.

He remained silent, and Lucy, busy about the camp fire, did not speak again till the simple fare was ready. Then she spread a tarpaulin in the shade.

"I'm pretty hungry myself," she said. "But I don't suppose I know what hunger is."

"After a while a fellow loses the feelin' of hunger," he replied. "I reckon it'll come back quick. . . . This all looks good."

So they began to eat. Lucy's excitement, her sense of the unreality of this adventure, in nowise impaired her appetite.

"I mustn't stay long," she said, suddenly remembering.

"Will you come back—again?" he asked.

The question startled Lucy. "Why I—I—I don't know. . . . Won't you ride in to the Ford just as soon as you're able?"

"I reckon not."

"But it's the only place where there's people in hundreds of miles. Surely you won't try to go back—the way you came?"

"When Wildfire left that country I left it. We can't go back."

"Then you've no people—no one you care for?" she asked in sweet seriousness.

"There's no one. I'm an orphan. My people were lost in an Indian massacre—with a wagon train crossin' Wyomin'. A few escaped, an' I was one of the youngsters. I had a tough time, like a stray dog, till I grew up. An' then I took to the desert."

"Oh, I see. I—I'm sorry," replied Lucy. "But that's not very different from my dad's story of his early years. . . . What will you do now?"

"I'll stay here till my back straightens out. . . . Will you ride out again?"

"Yes," replied Lucy without looking at him, and she wondered if it were really she who was speaking.

Then he asked her about the Ford, and Bostil, and the ranches and villages north, and the riders and horses. Lucy told him everything she knew and could think of, and lastly, after waxing eloquent on the horses of the uplands, particularly Bostil's, she gave him a graphic account of Cordts and Dick Sears.

"Horse thieves!" exclaimed the rider darkly. There was a grimness as well as fear in his tone. "I've heard of Sears, but not Cordts. Where does this band hang out?"

"No one knows. Holley says they hide up in the cañon country. None of the riders have ever tried to track them far. It would be useless. Holley says there are plateaus of rich grass and great forests. The Ute Indians say that much too. But we know little about the wild country."

"Aren't there any hunters at Bostil's Ford?"

"Wild-horse hunters, you mean?"

"No. Bearan'deer hunters."

"There are none. And I suppose that's why we're not familiar with the wild cañon country. I'd like to ride in there sometime and camp. But our people don't go in for that. They love the open ranges. No one I know, except a half-witted boy, ever rode down among these monuments. And how wonderful a place! It can't be more than twenty miles from home. . . . I must be going soon. I'm forgetting Sage King. Did I tell you I was training him for the races?"

"No, you didn't. What races? Tell me," he replied with keen interest.

Then Lucy told him about the great passion of her father—about the long, time-honored custom of free-for-all races, and the great races that had been run in the past; about the Creeches and their swift horses; about the rivalry and speculation and betting; and lastly about the races to be run in a few weeks—races so wonderful in prospect that even the horse thief Cordts had begged to be allowed to attend.

"I'm going to see the King beat Creech's roan," shouted the rider with red in his cheeks and a flash in his eye.

His enthusiasm warmed Lucy's interest, yet it made her thoughtful. Ideas flashed into her mind. If the rider attended the races he would have that fleet stallion with him. He could not be separated from the horse that had cost him so dearly. What would Bostil and Holley and Farlane say at sight of Wildfire?

Suppose Wildfire were to enter the races! It was probable that he could run away from the whole field—even beat the King. Lucy thrilled and thrilled. What a surprise it would be! She had the rider's true love of seeing the unheralded horse win over the favorite. She had for years wanted to see a horse, and ride a horse, out in front of Sage King. Then suddenly all these flashing ideas coruscated seemingly into a gleam—a leaping, radiant, wonderful thought. Irresistibly it burst from her.

"Let me ride your Wildfire in the great race!" she cried breathlessly.

His response was instantaneous—a smile that was keen and sweet and strong, and a proffered hand. Impulsively Lucy clasped that hand with both hers.

"You don't mean it," she said. "Oh, it's what auntie would call one of my wild schemes. . . . And I'm growing up—they say. . . . But oh, if I could ride Wildfire against the field in that race! . . . If I only could!"

She was on fire with the hope, flushing, tingling. She was unconscious of her effect upon the rider, who gazed at her with a newborn light in his eyes.

"You can ride him. I reckon I'd like to see that race just as much as Bostil or Cordts or any man. . . . An' see here, girl, Wildfire can beat this gray racer of your father's."

"Oh!" cried Lucy.

"Wildfire can beat the King," repeated the rider, intensely. "The tame horse doesn't step on this earth that can run with Wildfire. He's a stallion. He has been a killer of horses. It's in him to kill. If he ran a race it would be that instinct in him."

"How can we plan it?" went on Lucy impulsively. She had forgotten to withdraw her hands from his. "It must be a

surprise—a complete surprise. If you came to the Ford we couldn't keep it secret. And dad or Farlane would prevent me, somehow."

"It's easy. Ride out here as often as you can. Bring a light saddle an' let me put you up on Wildfire. You'll run him—train him—get him in shape. Then the day of the races or the night before I'll go in, an' hide out in the sage till you come or send for Wildfire."

"Oh, it'll be glorious!" she cried with eyes like stars. "I know just where to have you hide. A pile of rocks near the race course. There's a spring and good grass. I could ride out to you just before the big race, and we'd come back with me on Wildfire. The crowd always stays down at the end of the race course. Only the starters stay out there. . . . Oh, I can see Bostil when that red stallion runs into sight!"

"Well, is it settled?" queried the rider strangely.

Lucy was startled into self-consciousness by his tone. How strange he must have felt! And his eyes were piercing.

"You mean that I ride Wildfire?" she replied shyly. "Yes, if you'll let me."

"I'll be proud."

"You're very good. . . . And do you think Wildfire can beat the King?"

"I know it."

"How do you know?"

"I've seen both horses."

"But it will be a grand race."

"I reckon so. It's likely to be the grandest ever seen. But Wildfire will win because he's run wild all his life—an' run to kill other horses. . . . The only question is—can you ride him?"

"Yes. I never saw the horse I couldn't ride. Dad says there are some I can't ride. Farlane says not. Only two horses have thrown me: the King and Sarchedon. But that was before they knew me. And I was sort of wild. I can make your Wildfire love me."

"That's the last part of it I'd ever doubt," replied the rider. "It's settled then. I'll camp here. I'll be well in a few days. Then I'll take Wildfire in hand. You will ride out whenever you have a chance without bein' seen. An' the two of us will train the stallion to upset that race."

"Yes—then it's settled."

Lucy's gaze was impelled and held by the rider's. Why was he so pale? But then, he had been injured—weakened. This compact between them had somehow changed their relation. She seemed to have known him long.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Lin Slone," replied the rider.

Then she released her hands. "I must ride in now. If this isn't a dream I'll come back soon." She mounted Sage King.

"It's good to see you up there," said Slone. "An' that splendid horse! . . . He knows what he is. It'll break Bostil's heart to see that horse beat."

"Dad'll feel bad, but it'll do him good," replied Lucy.

That was the old rider's ruthless spirit speaking out of his daughter's lips.

Slone went close to the King, and putting a hand on the pommel he looked up at Lucy.

"Maybe—it is—a dream—an' you won't come back," he said with unsteady voice.

"Then I'll come in dreams," she flashed.

"Be careful of yourself. . . . Good-by."

And at a touch the impatient King was off. From far up the slope near a monument Lucy looked back. Slone was watching her. She waved a gauntleted hand—and then looked back no more.

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AFTER children have raised their crops on school gardens it would seem as though the first question to be considered would be one having to do with the sale of the produce, with an idea of retaining the child's interest.

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How to Make the Pancake

By Marion Harris Neil

AT THIS season many of our readers will be glad of directions for making batter and pancakes. Batter, as we all know, is a mixture of eggs, flour and milk, with a little salt. Sufficient air should be beaten or battered in to give the necessary lightness, and the charm of a pancake to most people consists in its contrast to the dry sugar, sirup, preserves, fruit, gravy or meat which it accompanies.

TO MAKE PLAIN BATTER

Sift two cupfuls of flour and one teaspoonful of salt into a basin. Drop two whole fresh eggs into the center of the flour. Have two cupfuls of milk and pour in nearly one-third of it to begin with, and stir the mixture with a wooden spoon. Beat this until it is perfectly smooth, then add the remainder of the milk gradually, beating all the time. Occasionally lift a large spoonful of the batter, and let it pour down from a height. When it is well beaten, and all the milk is added, set it away in a cool place for two hours. This will improve the batter immensely, lightening it considerably.

To make pancakes with this batter, pour a teacupful of the mixture into a well-greased frying pan and place it over the fire, loosen it round the edges as it sets, keep shaking the pan to loosen the pancake, then slip a knife under and turn it, being careful not to break it.

When it is colored on both sides cut it through the middle, and slip it onto a hot dish. Put a spoonful of sugar on each half, roll it up, and pile one on top of the other to keep soft and hot.

This batter makes an excellent Yorkshire pudding. To bake the pudding, have a rather deep tin, and pour into it two or three spoonfuls of the fat from a roasting tin. If no roast is cooking—and remember, Yorkshire pudding is a fine accompaniment to stewed steak, or grilled chops or steaks—two or three spoonfuls of drippings must be put into the tin, and the tin and the fat in it must be very hot before putting in the batter. Bake in a very hot oven for twenty minutes. It should puff up and should be served very quickly when ready.

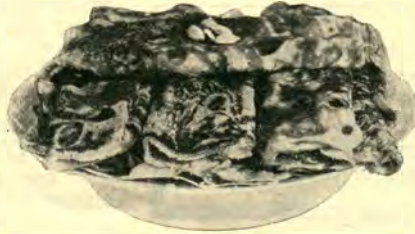
SCOTCH PANCAKES

To two cupfuls of sweet milk add two tablespoonfuls of melted butter, four well-beaten eggs, one cupful of flour, one teaspoonful of baking powder, a quarter of a teaspoonful of salt, and mix thoroughly to a thin batter. Place a small round frying pan on the fire with a little clarified butter in it, pour half a cupful of the batter into it when it is thoroughly hot, turn the pan round to cover the whole bottom with the batter, and fry to a nice brown. Toss the pancake to the other side and when it is

ready spread it with marmalade, roll it up and serve with sugar and sliced lemons.

FRENCH PANCAKES

Heat one cupful of milk in a small saucepan. Cream four tablespoonfuls of butter with four tablespoonfuls of sugar, add two beaten eggs, beat for a few minutes and stir in half a cupful of flour. Now stir in the warm milk, cover, and let it stand for an hour. Have ready six buttered saucers, put an equal quantity of the batter into each, bake quickly until the batter rises, then more slowly for about ten minutes. Spread five of the pancakes with warmed preserves, place them on top of one another, cover them with the plain pancake, and dredge with fine sugar. Serve at once.



Stuffed Pancakes

CREAM PANCAKES

Beat two eggs with four tablespoonfuls of sugar, add two cupfuls of cream, flavoring to taste with grated nutmeg or powdered cinnamon, a quarter of a teaspoonful of salt and one and a half cupfuls of sifted flour. Beat to a smooth batter, and fry in the usual way. Spread each pancake with honey, roll up and serve, decorated with strips of candied orange peel.

PANCAKES À LA NORMANDE

Prepare a pancake batter and let it stand for one hour. Peel and core three apples, and cut them in thin slices. Melt four tablespoonfuls of butter in a frying pan, and put in the slices of apple, and sauté them in the butter. Put a small piece of butter or lard into an omelet pan; when hot, cover the bottom of the pan with some of the pancake mixture, arrange over this a layer of the apple slices, and cover with some more of the batter. When it is lightly colored toss the pancake over, and turn it out when done onto a sugared paper. Continue in this way until all the batter is used up. Dish on a napkin, and serve very hot.

STUFFED PANCAKES

Cream four tablespoonfuls of butter, add two tablespoonfuls of red currant jelly, one teaspoonful of lemon juice and one tablespoonful of any preferred fruit juice. Make the pancakes in the usual way, fill them with the prepared mixture, and roll them up. Sprinkle with sugar and serve very hot.

DUBLIN PANCAKES

Beat up the yolks of six eggs, add one wineglassful of fruit juice, half a teaspoonful of grated nutmeg and four tablespoonfuls of slightly warmed butter. Stir in two cupfuls of flour, two cupfuls of cream and the whites of the eggs beaten to a stiff froth. Mix to a smooth batter and fry in the usual way. Serve with heated jelly or maple sirup.

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