

Vol. 1933
HE

MARCH, 1933

FRONTIER

A MAGAZINE OF THE NORTHWEST



ADAM CARGO

A Novel by Upton Terrell

(To be completed in two issues)

MYTHS ABOUT AUTHORS

Vardis Fisher

“ARRIVED: ALL WELL” and “WE HAD A FIGHT”

Officers' reports to the War Department in early western days

Vol. XIII

MARCH, 1933

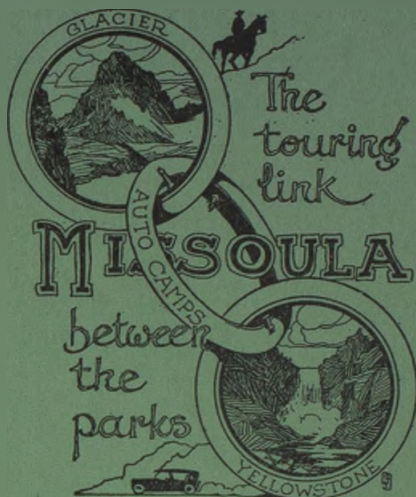
Number 3

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Volume Thirteen

MARCH, 1933

Number 3

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ABOARD THE COVERED WAGON

UPTON TERRELL, a newspaper man in Chicago, left school at seventeen to drive a Red Cross ambulance in the World War. For ten years after the war he was "successively cowboy, guide, sailor, tramp, reporter, associate editor, and correspondent, and knows forty-two of the forty-eight states as well as" he knows his home town. *Adam Cargo* is his first published novel and the third he has written. His wife is the artist, Irene Spurgeon Terrell.

ELEANOR HAMMOND, Portland, Oregon, calls herself "by profession and necessity a hack writer," but Northwest readers know her as a poet of many fine writings. MINNIE HITE MOODY, a nationally recognized poet, lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

VARDIS FISHER is the author of three novels, *Toilers of the Hills*, *Dark Bridwell*, and the recently published *In Tragic Life*, the first of a tetralogy. Until recently he has been professor of English, at the University of Utah and then at Washington Square College, N. Y. C.; he now makes his home in his native Idaho. Other Idahoans are IRENE WELCH GRISSOM, its poet laureate and author of *Verse of the New West*, and GRACE HOSTER, who writes, "I am one of the astigmatically hopeful army of English teachers."

HAL DRIGGS's (Portland) earlier story in *The Frontier* was published in the 1932 volume of *Best Short Short Stories* (Putnams). BENJAMIN APPEL's earlier *Frontier* story, *From a Feudist Diary*, won high praise. He lives in Brooklyn.

LILIAN WHITE SPENCER, Denver, has published a volume of poems on Indian life. TED OLSON, author of *A Stranger and Afraid*, lives in Laramie, Wyoming. The state of Washington claims two poets, RUTH CLAYTON, whose people were central Nebraska pioneers, and JAY RANSOM, who is a student in the junior college at Aberdeen. CATHERINE MACLEOD sends her poem from Alabama.

AUGUST DERLETH, though in his twenty-fourth year, has had published 105 stories. His principal delight is in nature. He lives in Sauk City, Wisconsin. FRED J. WARD, who is a superintendent of schools in Montana, has been a newspaper man and for some years an occasional writer. *The Coffin Boat* is HOWARD CORNING's (Portland) third story to appear in *The Frontier* this year. He is more widely known as a poet. *The New Poetry*, recently edited by Harriett Monroe, carries four of his poems. FRANCIS SELL is also an Oregon writer. He was "born in Riverton in 1902, when it was a thriving town of nine saloons, six coal mines, one church, and a school that taught the three R's four months a year." MARY W. GREEN lives in Yakima, Washington.

PEARL PRICE ROBERTSON, who lives on a farm in the Flathead Valley, Montana, was

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The Bookman, January, 20 column inches.

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Rocky Mountain News (Denver), December 11, 12½ column inches.

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Deseret News, Salt Lake City, January 7, 42 column inches.

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The Portland (Ore.) Journal, January 15, 10 column inches.

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Pasadena (Calif.) Star-News, January 7, 11 column inches.

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New York Times, December 25, 24 column inches.

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The Philadelphia Record, December 18, 10½ column inches.

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John A. Killick in Evanston (Ill.) News-Index, December 15, 22 column inches.

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a school teacher, married a school teacher and "helped him prove up a homestead and lose it," and is the mother of twelve children. She has found time to attend summer schools and to serve as a news correspondent for a daily paper.

Three other Montana writers contribute to this issue, DONNE STEVENS, Billings, whose writing here appears in print for the first time; STEVE HOGAN, Butte, who has contributed to *The Frontier* before; and GLENDOLIN WAGNER, author of the recently published *Moccasins and Indian Blankets*.

LLOYD LEHRBAS, an Idahoan and a newspaper man, has the hobby of "digging up old stuff about early Idaho." While on duty as a correspondent in the State and War Departments in Washington he made extracts from old records that interested him.

LITERARY NEWS

Time, January 9, broadcasts a hot market tip to pulp writers from the *American Fiction Guild*, 178 Fifth Ave., NYC: that the *Dell Publishing Co.*'s three pulps are again in need of material, and that the *Clayton* group are once more paying on acceptance. The Oregon branch of the Guild met in Portland last December to discuss the market situation and aid in national publicity distributed by *E. Hofer and Sons'* syndicate to 12,000 county dailies and weeklies. Col. Hofer is President Emeritus of the League of Western Writers. Officers of the Portland branch of the Oregon Guild chapter are ALBERT RICHARD WETJEN, EDMUND DU PERRIER, and ADA HEDGES.

ALBERT R. WETJEN and RODERICK LULL, with associate editors, JAMES STEVENS and BORGHILD LEE, have launched *The Outlander*, a quarterly literary review, and experienced the intoxicating pleasure of seeing the first issue off the press. Editors, contributors and friends signalized the event with a dinner at Woodcock's, January 23. The editorial vision is that *The Outlander* shall deal with life exclusively. "It will publish stories, essays and verse with genuine vitality. It does not promise to be smart. It does not expect to be popular. It is interested in life as it is, and not as people think it ought to be, and certainly not as it is represented by the various schools and cliques that today infest American letters." It will be a magazine of protest against all formulas, against hypocrisy, against bunk.

RODERICK LULL's stories are familiar to readers of *Clay*, *The Midland*, and *Story*. Stories by A. R. Wetjen will appear frequently in *Collier's* this year, in *Adventure*, and the *Tower Publications*. Six of his earlier stories are being translated into Swedish and Austrian; and *For My Lady*,

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originally in *Collier's*, will be reprinted in Thomas Uzzell's (new) annual anthology of short stories. A sea novel on which Mr. Wetjen is working is tentatively entitled *Derelect*.

NARD JONES's novel, *Wheat Women*, was issued January 26 by Duffield & Green. RUSSELL BLANKENSHIP, formerly of Whitman College, now with the University of Washington, author of *American Literature, an Expression of the National Mind*, is at work on two volumes of a high school series to be published by Scribner's.

DR. F. L. NUSSBAUM, professor of history, University of Wyoming, is publishing *History of the Economic Institutions of Europe*, in February, under the imprint of F. S. Croft & Co., N. Y. OLGA MOORE, Laramie, Wyo., a regular contributor to *Delineator*, has a story, *Section Two, Township Six*, in the February *Country Gentleman*.

BEATRICE BRACE, on the staff of the *Oakley Herald*, Oakley, Idaho, commends the Idaho Falls Public Library for compiling, in manuscript, a *Who's Who in Idaho* in literature, art, and music, for loan to responsible persons. Constant complaint is made that public libraries are buying no books; and as constantly it is noted that hundreds of persons are using their present enforced leisure in libraries, reading not for anodyne, but for sounder knowledge in the fields of economics, history, and philosophy. The Portland Public Library has a collection of original oils and water colors which borrowers may hang in their homes for a period of one month. There need be no water-tight compartments for the several arts. MRS. EVELYN HILL of the Laramie, Wyo., Quill Club, brings to its meetings original paintings instead of manuscript.

Part-Time Puritans, book-length verse manuscript of LUCY M. C. ROBINSON, Spokane, is ready for a publisher. MARY BRINKER POST, Spokane, is now a regular contributor to *Pictorial Review*, with material in the truest sense regional.

An effort is being made, through the co-operation of TED OLSON and DR. W. O. CLOUGH of Laramie, Wyo., to gather into a small volume the literary remains of the late Dr. June E. Downey, a writer of depth and force, starred in *Prominent Men of Service*.

The only new material from the Northwest in Harriet Monroe's revised edition of *The New Poetry* is four poems of HOWARD MCKINLEY CORNING's, among them *The Mountain in the Sky* first published in *The Frontier*.

IRL MORSE, editor of *Better Verse*, St. Paul, is directing a broadside against mutual praise-slinging between ninth-rate poets, a practice he considers of disservice to poetry.

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February bulletin of *The Poetry Society of America*. One of the society's annual awards went to CATHERINE PARMENTER of Colorado Springs, for her poem, *Interim*. A member asks for more news from the far west.

THE METROPOLITAN PRESS is gratified by the reception of *Genevieve, a Tale of Oregon*, a picture of Oregon in the '80's. This completed manuscript, with others unfinished, was found among the papers of Frederick Homer Balch, author of *The Bridge of the Gods*, who died aged thirty. Other recent books from The Metropolitan Press are *Men of Champoege*, by CAROLINE C. DOBBS, and *Mid Sunshine and Mist* by LESLIE H. HASKINS. The firm is one of the sponsors of ELEANOR ALLEN's daily radio program, *The Gay Parade*, over KFJR. Miss Allen says there is accelerated interest in the work of Northwest writers, in Portland. VIVIAN COOLEY, head of the Book Dept. of Meier & Frank, officially opened the series of "close-ups" Miss Allen is giving. Miss Allen's *Seb, the Bold*, which ran for nineteen months as a serial in the *Portland Oregonian*, has been sold to a syndicate serving Canada, the United States, and England. She had two other juveniles ready for the publishers, and a book of verse, *The Swift Runner*. She is working on another juvenile serial, *The Sky Devil*, a story of an American air pilot with a background of the pearl fisheries near Aru Islands, on the north coast of Australia.

ANTHONY EUWER, author of *The Friendly Fire*, has given a series of radio talks on ten Oregon authors over station KOAC, Corvallis, Ore. The continuity was by ADA HASTINGS HEDGES.

MRS. M. TRUESDELL COOPER of Denver is including in her gift anthology *ETHEL ROMIG FULLER's* much anthologized poem, *Proof*, characterized as the most quoted contemporary poem. *Travel* has accepted Mrs. Fuller's illustrated story, *Black Hemlocks*, an impressionistic study of the timber-line trees of Mt. Baker.

DAVID ROSS, Columbia Broadcasting Co., 485 Madison Ave., N. Y. C., voted by the American Academy of Arts and Science to have the best radio voice of 1932, has received 2000 letters of inquiry about books he has published in the past two years. He can consider for radio reading only poems offered without fee, since his programs are unsponsored. *Station W LAP, Louisville, Ky.*, is running weekly half-hour readings from living American poets.

ANNA HEMPSTEAD BRANCH, 147 Ave. B, N. Y. C., is chairman of the Woman's Poetry committee at the coming Chicago World's Fair. She asks information concerning poetry prizes to be offered in 1933-34, and suggestions as to what should be included in the poetry exhibition, July 16-23. She wants poems on science or scientific subjects.

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Continued on page 254



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A MAGAZINE OF THE NORTHWEST

"The frontiers are not east or west, north or south, but wherever a man fronts a fact."
—THOREAU.

ADAM CARGO

UPTON TERRELL

FOREWORD

It took two years to learn the story of Adam Cargo, and yet, as novels go, it is very short. But there were long periods when no material was forthcoming, weeks of silence reflecting the intense stillness of that vast empty colorful country of amber deserts and high blue mountains that is New Mexico. You as a reader will consume it in a few hours. Men speaking from books speak faster than in real life. The element of time, of years of living is not present. A lifetime passes in an evening.

Most of the story was told me by an old man whom I have called Adam Cargo. I don't know why he told it to me. I must have appeared terrifically insignificant to him. After what he had done and known! . . . Or perhaps he wanted to talk once, to recall certain things and speak of them before it was too late, and I chanced to be about, inclined to listen. If this is true, I feel it was a stroke of fortune, my good luck. But I do not believe he was reminiscent because he was romantic. Not at all. I would rather say he simply felt like talking.

The story has been described as incomplete in certain aspects, and in places to be without proper continuity. But you will see this is not my fault. I have written what I was told. And after all when there is a good story to be set down continuity is not the most important thing to be considered. If the story is complete, then continuity is hardly of more importance than using real names for characters in fiction.

We have got used to having our stories dished up in certain forms, and because I have been obliged to adhere to these literary rules, the temptation to embellish the story of Adam Cargo, to bridge the gaps with stuff of my own invention, was strong. I refrained on the ground that it was not my story. It belonged to him.

It was as if an artist, say a good friend of mine, had presented me with one of his paintings and I had accepted it with obvious gratitude, but secretly I found fault with it. Certain things about it I did not like. One day I took paints and brushes and attempted to change it, to make it as I wished it, and in so doing ruined it. By all that is sacred, I would have been a transgressor!

Then there is here only the story of that old man out in Santa Fe who brought before my eyes with his mumbled words an interrupted pageant of the stirring years from a period shortly before the Civil War up to the modern day when Santa Fe became a mecca for artists and tourists who never knew the Old West; the story of the old man who talked because he felt like talking, not because his memories, nearing an end, were warming to his heart, nor because it was his pleasure to dream of the years gone when he held his place in the world of men. No. You will find, I think, that in this case I am the romantic one.

UPTON TERRELL.

Chicago.

December, 1932.

THE old man said he met Omar Palo in a saloon in El Paso. I told myself, after I had heard something about this meeting: If he was wandering on an uncertain course of life at the time, he stopped that evening; his direction became definite.

He had given me to understand that as a bartender, by force of necessity, he was very much dissatisfied. There was beyond the barroom of the adobe Eagle House a freedom he sought. If he had told me he wanted adventure

in the wild southwest, I should have believed him. He was young. But freedom suggested a hidden motive, for there was no one freer than a man alone in West Texas in the reckless years following the Civil War. I suspected he wanted to escape from something.

He had been robbed shortly after he had come to El Paso of several thousand dollars. The work in the Eagle House offered the only immediate solution to his problem, and his pleasant life as a roamer, a casual gambler, and all the charm of romantic and adventurous days and nights abruptly ended. It was then that he began to long for freedom, he became dissatisfied. A taste had awakened an appetite. And a man such as he earning a dollar honestly often shudders at the memory of the past. He vows he prefers to labor than to steal, knowing full well he would leap at another opportunity to acquire means without sweating for them. This twisted circumstance makes him want to run away from everything he knows—and himself.

So I told myself: What he really wanted was to escape from something, and freedom was not simply an answer, a means of avoiding work. Freedom meant no walls, no confinement. Freedom meant no monotony which gives a man time for thinking about himself.

That evening Omar Palo, the Texas Swede, came to the Eagle House in El Paso he never forgot.

We, the little old man and I, were sitting in the Plaza in Santa Fe the afternoon he told me about it, sitting on a bench in the shade of a locust tree looking eastward beyond old buildings to the purple-green mountains. It seemed to me that he was talking of

an evening in the previous week, not one which had gone its way across the calendar sixty years before, for he recalled incidental details with remarkable clarity.

Omar was an immense man. He wore deerskin pantaloons and a fringed jacket. Walking up to the bar, he quietly requested whiskey, and when Adam had set out a bottle he took several drinks in rapid succession, as if to wash dust from his throat. Then he stopped drinking.

He had a large handsome head crowned with thick golden hair hardly less brilliant than sunlight. It was long and curled down over his jacket collar, waving like a plowed field of bright yellow earth. His eyes seemed to change in shade, as if with his thoughts, bright as a noon sky and then paler, like washed-out turquoise. Never gentle, never soft, perhaps they should be likened to two blue stones affected by playful shadows. His face was broad, very muscular and adobe-brown.

He left to my imagination the cause of their friendship, and I, instantly, could imagine half a dozen reasons. I should liked to have known where the Swede came from, where in all that vast country. He, Adam, did not know. The situation was logical. They talked. Adam must have been fluent, friendly. If the Swede was not, neither was he altogether a silent man, nor unwilling to enter a conversation.

It was Adam's memory of his own observations which interested me at the moment. What, I asked myself, of a casual friendship begun in a saloon?

The Swede came to the Eagle House at odd times during the next fortnight. Always he was alone. If there were no more than a few customers present he

would remain. He was never seen in a crowd. Adam thought of this then, and he thought about the way the Swede stood at the bar—in a half-turned position, facing the door. He had not been in the war, and he questioned Adam at length about it, appearing interested in Adam's tales of fighting. If he spoke of a country, of trails, of girls, cows and horses, it was with an entirely impersonal manner. Adam knew nothing about him, and there were only his actions to give rise to certain presumptions and suspicions.

Gunfire was more revealing. Gunfire spoke in a plain language, and if history be correct, men in West Texas preferred to use it. The results were more pointed, more satisfactory, more demonstrative.

The afternoon came upon which a man laughed just outside the door of the Eagle House. Omar, in the act of drinking, set down his glass quickly and scurried to cover behind the bar. He crouched there on one knee with drawn pistol. There was in the glance he gave Adam a distinct warning which Adam heeded.

Two men entered. One a tall man with a defective eye dropped silver on the bar and called for drinks. He contemplated Adam in his peculiar way, one eye seemingly looking off toward the horizon and the other bearing down coldly upon the object of its gaze.

"Newcomer?" he inquired at last.

Adam, forcing friendliness, nodded. "If three months is not long enough to make me an old timer, then I am."

"Three months," the man mused. "Some people never stay that long in one place." He laughed again, as if the words had stirred an amusing memory in him.

When they went out at last, Omar came out of his hiding place. He stood leaning on the end of the bar looking in a strange way at Adam. When Adam brought him a drink, he spoke deliberately.

"It might have been different if there had been some one else here . . ." He turned his lips in a slight smile. "You think I was scared."

"I'm not thinking," said Adam.

The Texas Swede laughed softly, turned and left the Eagle House by the rear door.

The man with the defective eye and his silent companion died that night. A blaze of pistol shots streaked the darkness of the court beside the saloon. The man who had laughed lay looking at the horizon and at the stars. His partner's silence was perfect. They were carried into the bar, placed in a corner and covered with blankets, to await burial in the morning. Then others, speculating calmly on the affair, lined the rail, drinking to alleviate the weight of the normality into which they had lapsed with the end of the excitement.

The ears of one bartender were open, his eyes were watchful. And out of the noise and confusion he heard a man ask another, "Where is the Texas Swede?"

He listened for an answer, and heard none, but he saw the questioner talking with two others. The three men sat at a table, their heads together.

It was after midnight when he found time to carry an empty cask outside. Abandoning it, he went around the building and up open stairs in the court to a balcony. The doors along the balcony were closed, leaving only starlight to guide him, but he knew

well the way, for his own room was at the far end. Still he searched the darkness, for always were there eyes in the El Paso night.

Suddenly a door ahead opened and a man came out of a dark room. He stepped aside and stood in the intense darkness against the wall. The man passed without seeing him, and went on down the stairs.

A Mexican girl was standing in the door out of which the man had come. She stepped out before him.

"Cargo," she said in a tone of disappointment. "Only you."

"Who did you expect?" he asked.

"Maybe another customer . . ."

He pushed her aside to go on, but she took his arm quickly.

"These two Americans who are killed . . ." she began in a whisper.

"What about them?"

"Perhaps you would like to know something."

"I want none of you," he warned in a suspicious voice.

She laughed softly. "But maybe you want something I know."

"What?"

"Be quiet," she said. "Walls have the ears. You will come inside if you want to hear."

"I want none of you," he repeated. "If you . . ."

"Be quiet, I say!"

She preceded him into the room and closed the door. He stood in darkness until she had lighted a small lamp. Then she faced him, smiling, her slender face half in uncertain light, half in flickering shadow.

"Well?" he said impatiently.

"You were looking for some one?" she asked.

"I was going to my room."

She twisted her lips and looked thoughtful. "Perhaps you know who killed the men?"

"How would I know?"

"Ah, you do not. Then you would like to know?"

He answered on guard, suspicious. "Well, can you tell me?"

"Perhaps."

"I see. If I pay you."

She shrugged her thin shoulders. "I do nothing without pay."

He turned as if to go. "You don't know."

"But I do," she said quickly.

He understood she was telling the truth, and moved close to her. "Have you told any one?"

"No. He would not pay me."

"Who?"

"The man who just left. He said he did not care. See? It is no business of his. I have seen no one else."

"But you will tell."

"For money. Yes. You will pay me?"

"No, I won't."

She became angry. "Then I know who will give me money."

He took her arm. "Anyway, how do you know?"

"Let go." She drew away from him, holding out her hand. "Money will answer that."

He seemed occupied with thought, but suddenly he leaped upon her, his hands closing on her throat, and bore her to the floor.

"I'll kill you . . ."

"Wait," she gasped. "I will tell you for nothing."

He loosened his grip. "Quick, then."

"The Swede of gold hair. He ran in here to hide after the fight. Then he gave me money and left."

His hands tightened. "He paid you to keep still and you'd sell him out."

She struggled, at last growing weak. He got up, leaving her lying on the floor gasping for breath, and went to his own room. There he put on his hat, and with a pistol in his pocket left the building.

He walked by a circuitous route to a Mexican house near the Rio Grande. At the patio gate an aged Mexican woman scrutinized him with plain suspicion.

"I want to see Palo," he said. "My name is Cargo—from the Eagle House."

"Not here," she mumbled, and disappeared in the dark court. He waited. Returning presently, the old woman opened the gate and led him through a narrow passage and up a flight of stairs to a balcony. Then she turned abruptly and went down again.

"Come in here," said Omar. He stepped from a shadowed corner. The two men went into a nearby room. A candle burned in a pottery dish, its frail flame causing shadows to dart about the room. Adam sat down.

"You better leave at once," he said without hesitation. "There are men looking for you."

"Why?"

"If they don't know for certain you did it, they think you did. Perhaps they have reasons of their own to make them think you did it. I don't know. But soon they'll know for a fact."

"How?"

"The girl told me. She'll tell them," said Adam. "For a little money."

Palo sat on the bed. His cold eyes searched Adam's face.

"Why did you come here to tell me?"

Adam made a motion with his hand

as if to signify indifference. "I felt like it."

Palo walked across the room. "Well, I'm going. Only a fool would stay where he knows he didn't have a chance."

Adam moved to the door. "I wish I could go with you. I want to go on to Santa Fe, to get out of here."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"I never had a partner," said Omar with finality.

Adam looked at him steadily. "I'm not asking you." He opened the door.

"I know it. Mebbe I'll see you in Santa Fe some day, if I ever go there again."

"Good luck," said Adam, and went out.

The Mexican girl was found dead in her bed the next day. Someone had covered a small pistol with a blanket and a pillow and shot her in the head.

* * *

This was the beginning, but it wasn't the beginning I wanted. There were those years before he went to El Paso, the years of his boyhood, his youth, the war. Why did he go to El Paso? It was far beyond the line of settlement then. West Texas was inhabited by warring Indians, badmen, treacherous Mexicans. The country was abandoned to savages and adventurers, wanted men.

The cowtowns in Kansas were beginning to boom. Herds were creeping up the new Chisholm Trail from south Texas, floating over prairies of the Indian Nation—to markets made possible by a finger of steel pointing from the Mississippi Valley to the endless plains

running into the western horizon. Only a few cattlemen had ventured farther west. Some herds had gone to New Mexico, Arizona, even to California. But you could count them on one hand.

Something had carried him on. I wondered if it was fear, or only that inexplicable force which sends men into a wilderness for no reason at all. I did not think so. There was a reason.

I went to his room one cold, rainy afternoon and found him sitting before a small fire, his hands folded in relaxation in his lap. Later, after I had hurried to my house to set down quickly what he had told me so that I would forget none of it, I wrote something about him as he was then in Santa Fe, as I had seen him and as I had heard about him from other people.

He went often in the afternoon to sit on a bench in the plaza. Sometimes he would sit alone for hours. The scene must have awakened memories. He had sat in the same plaza when there were no railroads west of Kansas, when it was lined with traders' wagons, trains on their way east or west, and the people were filled with an expectancy, an intense excitement. It was the frontier, or it was beyond the frontier. There were a thousand miles between it and civilization, east or west. The Indians had not given up. And there were some of the same buildings to stare at, the governor's palace fringed with motor cars, the peacefulness of the sanctuary of San Miguel disturbed by horns and clatter on pavement. At sunset he would leave, when long shadows lay across the plaza and the sun had fallen behind the blue Jemez in the west. He would disappear into a narrow street between old walls he had known since that day he

came to the ancient city so many years before. It grew cold quickly after the sun had gone down.

He lived in the town house of Jules Mason, the cattleman. It was a very old house rambling off into rounded corners and with weathered eaves jutting into the turquoise sky framing it. He had lived for a number of years alone in a room off the patio which had an outside entrance of its own. It was as he liked it, for he wanted solitude (and freedom). Days would pass during which he would be seen by no one, except the servants in the house. And these humble people, who really seemed to understand his moods better than their superiors, bothered him not at all. He would go and come in and out of the room at will, in the sunlight or in the moonlight, in the starlight, as he had done almost all of his life.

He kept in the room a few things he had saved from the years of action. Mementos. There was an old saddle with a round, flat horn; a horse hair lariat and a quirt of rawhide; two pistols and a Winchester saddle rifle. A buffalo head hung over an adobe fireplace; Navajo blankets lay about the floor; antelope prongs over the door. But there was nothing in the room to remind him of the gentle moments of his past, those few times when he must have paused in his recklessness, his vigorous living, to speak soft words, to consider the things closest to his heart. Nothing of these moments. Only reminders of action and adventure. And the necessary modern conveniences he had come to know, that he had done without the greater part of his life. His own bath of tile; his own soft couch made each morning, turned for rest each evening, by the house-

keeper. And beside it sewed pelts of Angora goat for him to step on when arising, to warm his cold feet. A boy made a fire at dawn, although there was a modern heating plant in the house. But he needed direct, intense warmth, for his blood was thin. The fire was kept burning on chill days and evenings, even when it was not needed. He preferred it. A radiator was unsatisfactory. (One does not wish to sit before a radiator.) And there were all these other things we have today, even in the far places. Electric lights and a radio. I was sure he despised it. I was not sure he did not despise all these benefits of a scientific age. But there were the old things. And there were Jules and Mrs. Mason, eager to fulfill his slightest wish, always concerned about him. The fading light brought comfort. Good Lord, I shuddered when I thought what it might have brought instead!

We went back to the beginning of things on this afternoon, but not for long. It was as if, having hardly begun to talk about those distant years, he changed his mind. It was discouraging, but not a little surprised at finding myself on the Mississippi before the Civil War, I waited patiently. He would go back again—some day.

He spoke of it as the Valley of Singing and I had a feeling romance was near. But it was the singing of Jesse Lunce he was talking about, and I was aware that out of all his memories it remained one of the most vivid, still so effective that in his mind it gave to the Mississippi Valley another name, the Valley of Singing!

He had gone, as a boy, to live with the Lunce family after his mother and father had died. Jesse Lunce was a

trapper and fisherman, a great bulk of a man with a large head of curly black hair and round blue eyes set wide apart in a rugged face. He spent a great deal of time playing on a banjo and singing, and after Adam had come to live in his house, he got him to sing in duet. His own children, Sam a boy Adam's age, and Mary, a girl two years younger, would have nothing to do with singing. It was in their opinion foolishness, and Ophelia, their mother, felt likewise.

One day Jesse took him to the burial ground in which his father and mother had been interred. He had not seen the graves before; and he was completely bewildered by the sudden cold understanding of death. Jesse had brought some wild plants and ferns and set them about the wooden markers. He watched him, sitting under a nearby tree. Presently Jesse came and sat down beside him, looking out across the river.

"A man should sit awhile and think when he visits a graveyard," he said, but Adam made no reply. The thoughts in his mind had overwhelmed him. Words would have destroyed him.

They sat there until the river began to shimmer under the copper glint of the sunset, and the hills of Illinois, opposite them, were struck with gold, blue shadows marking the little valleys between them.

In the dusk they walked home along the river road . . . the man who knew well the finality of death, and the boy struggling to comprehend it.

One moonlit night they sat on the river bank. Jesse had been drinking in Carlinville, and had come home in a mellow state. The banjo chords awakened emotions in him. He swayed

back and forth. The moonlight, falling on his face, accentuated its deep lines. His fine voice drifted out across the water, the boy's tenor blending, now properly rising and falling as he had been taught to harmonize. He must have been a good singer. He must have enjoyed it, too.

They remained beside the river all night. Jesse told a story, a long tale of early river days, of fighting and death and love. Then there were Indians on the river. Beyond the right bank lay the great unknown west.

"How times have changed!" Jesse said. "Now men and women leave for California as if they were going six miles to Carlinville."

The old man sitting before me in the quiet adobe room had seen a greater change! He had seen planes curving with the sun from ocean to ocean, heard the motors droning in the night under the desert stars as he had heard the old wagon wheels creaking on the prairie.

Jesse could remember the Indians, the last ones to leave or die, dirty and ragged in their camps, hope gone from their eyes, helpless before the white tide sweeping westward. Thousands of people all appearing bereft of their senses, mad with desire, covetous, driven to frenzy by fabled opportunities!

He wondered if Adam understood the moonlight.

The moonlight was corn dust falling from the land of eternal harvest. Listen to the wind-words and to the words of the river whispered to the grasses on the bank. Listen to the grasses sighing in answer.

The first faint light of dawn rose in the east. The tale ended. They fell asleep. When the sun fell hot on him, Adam awoke. He laid his shirt over

Jesse's face to keep the flies off, and went away.

I waited for more. There was something more important in his youth than singing, than fishing and trapping. Numerous questions came to mind. I asked none of them. It was his story. I feared he would never take me back to the Mississippi. I did not want singing. Oh, no. I could contrive the touch of such sort of romance—

But as a young man he suddenly left the Lunce family, left their shanty, left the singing, left the trap lines he had inherited from his father, and he never returned.

He told me he never went back, and then he stopped talking and began to fumble with a bottle. We took a nip from thin glasses. And I went out, the word "why" burning my lips more than the whiskey.

Still I was glad to get back to El Paso. Something had been left unfinished there. Omar was gone, no one knew where. I wondered if he would meet him again. When?

One evening a man named Jones came into the Eagle House and left a pouch of money with him.

"I've got some business hereabouts," he said, "and I don't want to carry so much money with me. I'll be gone about ten days. You take care of it for me."

When the ten days had passed and Jones had not returned, he got to thinking about the money, wondering if Jones would come back. He opened the pouch. There were several thousand dollars in gold in it.

If Jones did not come back, he thought!

A man's money was usually safe in

a saloonkeeper's pocket in those days. I did not believe he considered stealing it. The country was large, empty, but it was too small for such work. And he was not this type of thief. A thought came to him. Gamblers would call it a hunch. And he was born to be a gambler. I soon found this to be true.

The thought was that there often is luck in other people's money. It often is easy to make money for another when one cannot make it for oneself. He gambled his own money and consistently lost. Something must happen to change his luck.

He acted on the hunch. He took several gold pieces from the pouch and entered a game. It was early evening when he began to play, dawn when the game ended. His money belt was once more full. He replaced the borrowed gold, left the pouch with another bartender, and bought himself a trail outfit. Then he rode out of El Paso on the trail north to Santa Fe.

I felt we had left El Paso behind forever now, and I suspected my eagerness was apparent, for he seemed to be reviewing to himself what he had told me and considering the question of ending his tale telling. I reprimanded myself for disclosing any enthusiasm and promptly became unconcerned. I even put the thought of Omar out of my mind, but only after fervently hoping they would meet.

Then one day he took me (in his story) to ride a trail over the high colored ranges of northern New Mexico. He had been riding aimlessly for days, stopping here and there at Mexican ranchos and at trail stations.

This afternoon he was south and east of Santa Fe. His mare began to limp, and he discovered a foreleg was injured.

His predicament caused him some concern, for he was in a wild country of which he knew nothing. During the day he had seen no sign of a habitation, although he presumed there were Mexicans in the country, for few sections of New Mexico were totally uninhabited. If he could find water, it undoubtedly would lead him to a rancho.

The country about him was divided into small grassy valleys lying between high green and red pinon hills. The vegetation was proof of a fair rainfall. In the north he could see a great blue bank of mountains. In the southwest the hills were barren, broken and abrupt, and ran at sharp angles into a turquoise sky.

When he reached the crest of a hill, he dismounted and examined the mare's foreleg. It was commencing to swell above the fetlock. He stood there gazing over the colored country through which he had come. Ahead of him he could see only a short distance, for a ragged black ridge stood like a great wall supporting the sky which the falling sun was turning gold.

As he started to mount again his mare whinneyed. Its ears were tilted forward, and it was watching a clump of large pinons directly ahead. He scanned the trees carefully, but seeing nothing he presumed the mare had scented an animal. He decided to ride to the base of the black ridge, hoping there would be water in the wash below it.

He mounted and urged the mare forward. To his surprise she went eagerly at a halting gait. She whinneyed again, more shrilly than before, and an answering nickers came from the trees.

He halted her, and called out, "Hello!"

Omar Palo rode out of the pinons.

If they had searched a year for each other in all probability they would have failed to meet. But chance, call it fate if you prefer, brought them together on that lonely trail south of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. He was going to Santa Fe, but he never knew where Omar was going nor where he had been since they had parted in El Paso. So I did not know.

They sat in the shade of a pinon talking about the mare. Omar examined the injured foreleg and pronounced it hopelessly strained.

"It will be quite a spell before she is any good," he said, looking at Adam searchingly. "You're afoot."

Adam looked about the country. The sun had landed on the black ridge and the canyons were lost in purple. Omar stood up.

"There's water about a half a mile south," he said. "You'd best camp there tonight."

"And you?"

"I ain't sure," he answered. "But I got to go on. I got some business to attend."

Adam took the reins. "Well, it will be dark soon. I better get to the water."

"Adios, amigo mio."

"Adios."

Omar watched Adam out of sight, and Adam understood. Turning once he found Omar gone. He walked on slowly, leading the mare down a long slope into a shadowy canyon where the pines were immense. He heard a turkey call; the lovely evening song of doves. When he came to a small creek, he stood very still listening for

a sound in the great darkening silence. He heard only the creek water running around a rock.

He unsaddled the mare and turned her loose, regretfully watching her limp away through the trees. When she had vanished, he built a fire and cooked some meat, washing it down with cold creek water. The bread he carried, he saved, for he did not know when he would get more food. After eating, he smoked and sat thinking of Omar. If he felt it strange that they should meet again in the way they had, he felt it more peculiar that the Texas Swede had not elected to spend the night in camp with him instead of calmly saying farewell once more, perhaps forever. And he at last concluded that Omar did not desire his company.

But there were other problems and questions to consider, mainly the task of securing another horse. He lay comfortably on his blankets. The night was warm. The fire fell to a few coals, and went out. The stars were like silver fumes floating above the dark, still trees. A coyote tuned its melancholy throat, tried a long chord, and ended it dismally.

When he awoke at dawn and sat up in his blankets his eyes fell at once on Omar Palo who was sitting on a log with a rifle across his knees.

"Didn't expect me for breakfast, eh? Well, I just sat down to have a smoke before you woke up."

Several yards down the creek two horses were tied to a pinon tree.

"No," said Adam. "I didn't expect you at all."

He began to gather twigs for a fire. Palo got up and came over to him.

Continued on page 237

SECOND LOVE

ELEANOR HAMMOND

FUGITIVE

You have fled
Before distress
And known the fangs
Of loneliness.

Despair has lurked
Beside my bed
And sorrow from my hand
Has fed.

Softly now,
Lest they should hear us
And again
Come creeping near us.

Let our small fire
Burning bright
Drive lurking things
Back to the night.

Let me forget
Old dark alarms
In the comfort
Of your arms.

SECOND LOVE

You have brought back to me
Forgotten things,
Freshness of fields in spring
And lifting wings.

The joy of a new trail
Beneath my feet—
That comradeship is good
And love is sweet.

I BEAR OLD SCARS

I would bring you happiness
And quiet sleeping.
I would take away distress
And futile weeping.

But, oh my dear, my dear,
I know
For you and me
It will not be so!

Love is a two-edged
Hiltless blade—
I bear old scars
And I am afraid.

BED AND BOARD

A well swept hearth
Is not for me
Nor a garden's sweet
Tranquility.

A road-side fire
Belongs to you,
Tin-can coffee
And pot-luck stew—

But a pine bough bed
Is as soft as another.
Sky's a good enough roof—
Since we have each other.

HERITAGE

I think I was begotten
In a dim and airless room
Where four gray walls hemmed in a
bed
Respectably with gloom.

But my sons shall be begotten
Beneath wide cloudless skies—
Sweet fern in their father's nostrils,
Stars before their mother's eyes.

LOVE GIVES US MOMENTS

Love gives us moments
Of clear ecstasy
When walls melt into mist
And we go free—

Then the sharp pain of living ceases
And we know
How tides follow the moon
And grasses grow
And how brown leaves lie quiet
Under snow.

A HILLTOP IN SPRING

Fields are so sweet in spring
And clouds so high.
I shall remember this green hill
Until I die.

I shall remember sorrel red
And scent of clover
Long after love is dead
And sorrow over.

I shall remember this high place
In springtime sun
When all this poignancy of grief
Is done.

BLACK FROST

A time may come
When this hard driving anguish
Melts like a bitter winter's snow.
Spring may be waiting
Under some horizon—
I do not know.

But this I know,
That feet grow lame and weary.
Burdens grow heavy and of little worth.
Before that spring comes
To reclaim the meadows
We may be turned to earth.

PRAIRIE STARS

MINNIE HITE MOODY

How many ages have these silent stars
Dotted the darkness of this firmament?
How many generations have been blent
With the lost blood of desperate border wars
And dust that flashed in burnished scimitars
Of waving grass, before its hour was spent?
The ancient glacier's frozen malcontent
Once rolled this way beneath that same red Mars.
Then what am I who pause a moment here,
One with the wind and night, yet not of them?
One with the earth, yet strangely separate
This breath, this heartbeat, this ephemeral tear?
A thousand thousand summers past my fate
These stars shall gild this prairie's diadem!

MYTHS ABOUT AUTHORS

VARDIS FISHER

AUTHORS are a strange and incurable lot. In a cubic inch, they possess more vanity and malice and self-pity, more posturing egoism, and more emotional distortion, than can be found in any other group of persons outside of asylums. They multiply myths about themselves. They bring to birth and foster innumerable legends. And they are never so happy as when drifting through the literary atmosphere as an inscrutable parable. They are forever talking of sorcery and witchcraft and the tenuous nonsense that they call art; but when alone they stretch out and snore like any animal in possession of its senses. Our poets, who are presumed to be most delicate organisms, smoke, as in the case of a woman, long and deadly cigars; or sneak into a cheap restaurant, as in the case of a man, and stoke themselves with huge platters of beans. They offer a new philosophy of life; and at the moment when critics are beginning to take them seriously, they jump off a boat and drown themselves. In one moment they declare, with infinite tolerance, that they don't give a damn what anyone says about them; and in the next, they work up a fine agony of grief and abuse their mistresses or blow their brains out . . .

And all this, to be sure, is commonly known. But it is not so well known that authors—and I don't mean jobbers who support the paper industry—more than anyone else, including their parents and old college professors, brood upon and hatch those myths, those dynasties that stand like a great fog upon the literary centuries; and

which serve today, in more ways than you can throw a stick at, not only to make doctors' theses, but also as shades to a thousand windows of light. Because an author is a most ingenious fellow; and when he sets about to lose himself among legends, the chances are that he will become most thoroughly lost.

I cannot agree with those critics of a few decades ago who declared literary creation to be a growth, a physical phenomenon, like a jelly-fish or an oyster, the secret of whose nerves and sinews would some day be the common property of every craftsman with a typewriter and two hands. What we choose, perhaps with more pomp than reason, to call creation is not so simple as that. A poem or a novel is not a mechanism that grows like a turnip. But neither is it an inexplicable flowering of sweetness and light, nor an occult harmony of genius and destiny and the eternal verities. What it is and has been and most likely will continue to be is a dark and often desperate attempt to make the author seem sane and reasonable and to explain to his enemies why he has no friends. But in this, as in other matters, the author cannot write a line without becoming a myth-maker. Even from his letters, only the most penetrating mind can determine what sort of freak he is. Because the whole sum of his industry is a disguise of himself and a bewilderment of his readers; until, as in the case of Mr. Joyce, he throws up such a forest about himself that the reader, in his attempts to find

him, might as well try to cut his way across Africa with an axe.

I am going to look at some of these legends behind which authors entrench themselves and peer at the world; and to see where they came from and to ask why authors support them.

Take first the matter of genius. Of all words, an author takes this one most seriously. Wretched and impatient, he waits until some critic—whose mind was probably on golf—applies it to him; and then he darts to a mirror and looks in. "I'm a genius," he reflects. "Well, I had always suspected it!" And he strikes an attitude and says, "That now is what a genius looks like." And forthwith he begins, possibly as one self-deceived, possibly as one deliberate, to act like a genius and look like a genius. He becomes extravagant in his moods and intolerable in his whims. In time, it may be, some feature-writer will come to interview him; and then, affecting to be annoyed by intrusion, he will, nevertheless, disport himself in weird poses and he will deliver vast pronouncements on subjects about which he knows nothing: hoping (and yet a bit dubiously) to behave himself in all these as a genius ought.

Nor is this the worst of it. In time, indeed, he may write an appalling book about genius and talent, pointing out, in the manner of the Schoolmen, the precise differences. If his subject grows hot, he will discover that there are various kinds of talent, all shooting out like branches from the trunk of genius, and all neatly terraced like a bunch of cliff-dwellings.

And what does all this amount to? What is genius? Is there such a thing,

and, if so, what is it? But of course there isn't. What we call genius is nothing but intense, and therefore absurd, preoccupation with one thing; and if a writer is a genius because he is everlastingly editing and annotating himself, then how much greater as a genius must the lunatic be, who cannot separate the world and his fancies. And as for talent, it is the ability to do simple tasks well; and our astonishment in this matter ought to be given, not to the one who does them but to the one who cannot.

We use such words as genius, to be sure, only because, knowing we're not worth a hill of beans, we cry for distinction. And nobody more than the artist himself fosters and perpetuates this intellectual caste system. Being often an object of charity, and never, if he is honest, earning much more than his bed and board, it is quite natural for him to try to glorify his handicap. But that doesn't mean that he is a genius any more than it means that a senator is a public servant. The word is an empty word in an old tradition. It comes to us from that remote time when weaklings were knocked about and didn't like it, and established, in consequence, a dignity of their own. And it is now as useless as the old notions that kings were divine, that poets were prophets, and that mistresses were bad women.

But every serious writer, of course, no matter how dull and hopeful he may be, regards himself as a genius. He could not tolerate himself if he did not. But he doesn't really believe that he is a genius or that genius amounts to anything. If he did, he'd stop writing and cultivate sanity and a garden; because an author is driven to write in

an attempt to prove that he amounts to something, and it is his tragedy, and the sum total of his industry, that he can never prove it. He rests, in consequence, rather guiltily under his label; and he strives, in various ways, to distinguish himself with something more satisfying than an old and dead concept. And it is because of this that he becomes our most versatile myth-maker. In some cases, as in that of Bernard Shaw, he is so successful in spinning legends that he becomes lost to himself and horribly in view to the world.

Most authors, however, in spite of themselves and their publishers and their enemies, never bury themselves into complete visibility. Perhaps they don't live long enough. But they do very well with the time and material they have. Sherwood Anderson has done a splendid job and is now being kicked by his own efforts. Eugene O'Neill must sometimes stand aghast at the rate with which he is vanishing into a parable. And all our expatriates, who leave their shores in an effort to become homeless and misunderstood enigmas, take on, before they are through, an awful look of weariness, or take a slap at the world by revising all their books.

And authors, it is said, and happily believed by those who read them, are irresponsible. This is a pretty myth. As a matter of fact, I have never seen one who was not a very shrewd person. But it is true—is it not?—that they have to write with their feet in a pot of onions or with a spider in their vest pocket or in a room hung with the photographs of imbeciles. An author worth his salt writes when he has time to write. If he is forever

seeking the proper Greenwich Village, it is because he ought to be selling vacuum cleaners or herding sheep. Poe started a lot of this nonsense; and almost everything that he wrote proves that he should never have written at all.

Nor do authors like to read their own books. When the thing is done, they hide it in the flour-bin or give it to a newsboy. "I can never read a book after I have printed it. It bores me to death." And they don't read their books, it is true, if anybody is watching them. But they hide away and pore over them with their thoughts fluttering like autumn leaves; and if the book is funny, they laugh until they can be heard for miles; and if it is sad, they smudge all its pages with tears. For if an author didn't prefer his own sort of stuff, he'd write something else. He is only a grownup child. If a man, he may or may not have a beard, for at least one eminent novelist, whose outbursts shake publishers out of their chairs, is as whiskerless as an infant. If a woman, she is certain to have notions of sex equality. But always beyond the beard or the notions, you will find a pitiable and haunted and tragic child.

And it is said that authors are hard to live with; and they are, for the same reason that children are such a bother. They are vain and impulsive, in spite of all their cunning, and they thresh about in lordly fashion, regarding everything as something to be exploited. Having learned, in some fashion, that genius is related to neurosis, and that many artists of the past have been adulterers or epileptics or downright knaves, they turn weird emotional handsprings and expect the

world to treat them with charity and tolerance. If men, they violently abuse their wives, devastating the poor women with reproach and fury, or sneaking away to spend an interlude with a mistress, and then returning to be forgiven and embraced. And all this they excuse on the grounds of irresponsibility, coming most earnestly to believe, after years of practice, that they are mad inspired creatures, not only without self-control, but in whom self-control would be silly.

And if women, the case is more appalling still. I have been in the homes of several women who write poetry or fiction and always I have come away, staggering under what I found there. Often the woman is huge and aggressive and deadly; and the husband, as likely as not, is a small timid shaver who looks at his guest with wide haunted eyes. And always he is terrified if, in a moment alone with himself, he misses what his wife has said. They seem to regard their wives as great and themselves as most fortunate Boswells; but beyond this regard, which has been shoved down their throats like toys into a Christmas sock, is a wistful, a quaking, desire to recover their handful of manhood. Because artists are like sea-creatures that suck everything into themselves; and their husbands and wives, save in unusual cases, come at last to have no personality and no mind.

If an author-husband reads his stuff to amazed guests, the wife beams with a huge sunny approval, or glances sharply about, now and then, to mark a scoffer; whereupon, having rebuked the offender, she settles back to a rocking-chair full of thin and passionless admiration. Because what is read, of

course, she has heard a thousand times. And if the author-wife reads her stuff, or, as has been my experience, talks in long and hungry sentences about art, then the husband, slightly more dubious in such circumstances than a wife would be, looks a bit apprehensively at his guest; and if the guest, perjuring himself, declares it all to be true, the poor man almost chokes with gratitude.

It is also said—and this myth, of course, authors have dug out of somewhere—that the writer is indifferent to what is written about him. He is just about as indifferent as a man is to land when he comes down out of the sky in mid-ocean. With almost intolerable impatience he waits for reviews; and he reads them wolfishly and then reads them again and again. If they flatter him, he turns upon his wife a warm and caressing smile; and he reads them to her, though they mean to her no more—and possibly less—than the paper on the wall. And if the critics give him a spirited larping, he sags in a vast melancholy, or he seizes his book and reads it; and he reflects, with horrible misgivings, that it may not be quite perfect. In extreme cases, legend declares, he will sit down and write a thousand words of abuse to the critic: "Believe me, Sir, it is my humble opinion that you ought to be thinning beets or making buttons. What you know about art would not fill a small monosyllable . . ." Or he may twist his handkerchief and grow so solemn and haggard that his wife will revise his diet; or he may, as is infrequently the case, blow his head off or roll down a stairway and break his neck. And all this, you will observe, is quite exactly the

response of a child to a situation which is beyond his understanding. It makes no difference that authors may, and perhaps always do, recognize in a critic the measure of his worth; or that the critic, as is sometimes the case, shows no more intelligence than a flag-pole sitter. Because critics—recruited often from newspaper reporters or discarded college professors — are the self-appointed arbiters of taste; and authors, showing no more sense than an ostrich with its head in the mud, defer to them, as, in former whiles, they deferred to their mothers.

And it is said—and for this myth which reacts upon them with disastrous results, authors are in part responsible—that they are interesting persons. No one who has seen a half-dozen of them ever makes this mistake again. The only interesting author is a dishonest author. The honest author puts what he is into his books. It is absurd, therefore, to expect upon meeting him to be entertained or amazed. When not writing, he is nothing but a morbid incubator, hatching his next thoughts; and he looks dull and feels dull, as a hen must that broods too long; and he doesn't want to talk, because, until he brings his next monster to birth, he has nothing to say. You must stare at him as politely as you can and have pity for his inarticulate and woebegone face.

It is also well to point out that we have authors and we have talkers. I have never known a good author, and I expect never to see one, who in his conversation was worth listening to. When I come upon a brilliant talker, I know that his particular sort of vanity demands, for its lustiest exercise, a more personal audience. It may be

that alert and worshipful faces release in him what the typewriter and the cloister never could. And this may explain why some authors, when given a chance, leap to the radio like a fish to water. But they are not really authors: they are more concerned with what they can use than they are with leaving unread monuments to their death.

And not only are honest authors dull: they are, in appearance, most unprepossessing. They look more like bank clerks or bill collectors. It may be good advertising for a popular author to release his photograph; because readers of popular fiction are seeking, after all, only something that sounds and looks like themselves. But it is a mistake for the serious author to do so. Conrad had a splendid and most impressive head; and it was a photograph of it that led me to his books. After one look at many authors, however, I am convinced that they have nothing for me. Perhaps I am wrong. But the point remains that a book, or the rumor of a reputation and its quality, associates itself in our minds with the kind of personality and face that would harmonize with it. I read *The Old Wives' Tale* before I knew what Bennett looked like; and since then, his trilogy on my shelves has gathered the dust. Call it prejudice, if you will. But life is nothing but prejudice; and an author ought to look like his books, even if he doesn't. And he ought to realize what myth-makers we are and have sense enough to keep out of sight. But such is his vanity that he rushes to a photographer and sits in grave majesty, as if in process of being eternalized; or, like others, he may show what a vain and stupid fellow he is

by sticking a pipe in his mouth or holding a cigarette at a cocky angle like a fraternity boy; or (if a woman) the author may flatten two hands against her jowl. And in every case, it is reasonable to suppose, the author strives to look either fascinating or deathless.

I come finally to my last myth. It is supposed that authors, if implored with the proper blend of awe and graciousness, like to read their books and that audiences like to hear them. Neither assumption is true. Authors, of course, have sense enough to know that in this country they are envied—with how little reason!—but neither respected nor loved. And this is as it should be. Because, for the most part, authorship in this country deserves no more respect, and in some cases a lot less, than banking or radio crooning. And authors have learned this. Now and then, of course, one with brains enough to realize that nobody wants to hear him, is drafted to the ordeal and led like an ox to the fair; and after the exhibit is over, he rushes to a quiet spot and mops his brow.

For those who go to hear an author, and pay good money for the sacrifice, go for the same reason that they would go to a circus or read Robert Ripley; or they go to absorb a little culture, supposing the process to be similar to

that of water and a sponge. And they don't want to hear them—after one ordeal, at least—because authors in recitation are too preposterous for words. If they are not pompous clowns, as Vachel Lindsay used to be, or a wide-eyed adolescent scared out of his wits, then they are likely to preside on the rostrum with such an air of amazement for the beauty of their own stuff, or with such a dizzy looking down from Olympus, that the auditor, if not already hypnotized by rimes and rhetoric, wants to rise charitably and sneak away.

No: we authors are a tragic and side-splitting lot. We are paraded and fed sandwiches and tea and stared at, and toward all this emptiness we are like a little girl toward a new dress. We read the wonder in faces or hear it in words and we want to believe that it is real. But as we grow older we perceive that authorship is a circus and we are the clowns; and some of us, like Hergesheimer, repudiate the whole of it and flee into the *Post* family; and some vanish, like Hart Crane, in a flash of self-illumination; and some take to gin. Of these retaliatory measures, the first, it seems to me, leads to golf, the second to eulogy, and the third to a torpid liver. And is there nothing to be done about? Of course. We ought to be suppressed.

A MOUNTAIN LAUGHS

FRANCIS E. SELL

I am amused.
Walk lightly over me.
Here is something epic—
A drift of humor pagan gods would love.
Yesterday, high-noon,
Trivial mortals came,
Marked me off in section lines,

Reserved the mineral rights
And sold a part of me.
"Old so-and-so," they said,
"Now owns sections nine and ten."
I am amused.
Walk lightly while I resolve this joke
More thoroughly.

UP THE HILL

HAL DRIGGS

THEY piled off the steps of the day-coach on to the station platform, lugging their cheap suitcases and bulging pack-sacks. Weather-seasoned faces, clear eyes, full of repressed excitement. Four months, all summer, in the sticks, and now the big town and another stake to spend. Beyond the station, life roared. There was motion, there was color, after long months of toil, stark and joyless. Their young blood cried aloud for a share of this life, this motion, this color—for a share quickly served.

They hurried through the station, crossed the street, and for a moment huddled together, bewildered and dazed by the crowds and the traffic. Only one separated himself from the group. A stuffed pack-sack hung from one broad shoulder, and with apparent unconcern he swung in his left hand a heavy suitcase. His dress was as rough as any in the group, but, somehow, he appeared better dressed. His features were a trifle cleaner-cut; his expression, his bearing, a hint more decisive. "Well, I'm leaving you here," he told them, "So long—and be careful!"

"So long, Paul!" they chorused, and, half wistfully, watched him stride off down the street. They were aware of a slightly envious feeling. Paul seemed to know just where he was going.

"What the hell," asked one, "ain't he hittin' for the Skid-road?"

"Naw, Paul's funny. He'll shake the gang sometimes. Sometimes he won't, too. Funny guy."

"Well, what the hell, he's a *good* guy, ain't he?"

"Sure he is—sure! He's a *damned* good guy!"

"Well, what the hell, then? Le's hunt a floppin' place, and then . . ."

They went, enthusiastically, toward the Skid-road, toward that place which is not a road, nor merely one street, but may be many streets, many city blocks; which is a section where workers foregather; where they who prey on, or pander to the workers have set their traps and spread their nets.

Paul turned sharply away from this section. He walked many blocks. Finally he found himself back at a certain room, a room in a quiet neighborhood, which he had long maintained as his "headquarters." There were a few pictures hung about the walls of the place, some of them almost good. There were stacks of magazines, and many books, good ones, bad ones, trashy ones—blind gropings. And, excepting simple furniture, there was little else in the room. But Paul sighed with satisfaction as he solicitously examined everything. Pure luxury! Here was a bed with clean, white sheets, and good springs and a good mattress. Here was a place where, for a time, he could shut a door against the world of toil, with its strident insistence, its dust and sweat and dreariness.

And for some days, life was good. It was good to feel white linen against skin roughened by coarse garments; to give a thought to appearance, to pressed trousers and white collars. It was good to stroll leisurely about the city, and partake modestly of its comforts; to stay up late and lie long abed, with

no clamoring gong to waken sleepy groans and muttered curses.

But time dragged and days became long. Tough muscles lost something of their tone. Sound nerves frayed slightly. Paul procured more books, stacks of them. He bought magazines by the dozen. He read and he studied; but he was dissatisfied and restless. He walked miles of city streets, and peered into the faces of hurrying thousands. He observed the mobs that rushed to their work of mornings; he studied them, collectively and individually, as great business blocks spewed them forth to jam the streets at evening time; he glimpsed them as they sallied forth in party array. But, for all his reading and his studying and observing, he remained puzzled. Many things still eluded him.

These damn, sleek city people, how in hell could you approach them, anyhow? How come to know them? You were kicked out into the world when you were fourteen, and you learned the world's ragged edges, its seamy sides. You starved and you froze and you labored. And you survived, grew strong even. But what of the world's softer side, its spruce men, its fragile, incredible women, its softly-modulated tones, its tinkling laughter? That girl who just passed you, for instance, she as slim, as pliant, as a willow by a creek's edge, tapping along the sidewalk with her sophisticated feet? Suppose that by some miracle an opportunity was afforded you of speaking to her, what would you say? How interest, how impress her? Tell her how logging was done? Boast that you had wandered by foot and by freight train over all the vast Northwest? That you had labored, shoulder to shoulder,

in mine and camp and mill and construction job, with the toughest of the tough, and held your own? That you had helped to tame this great land, building its roads, driving its tunnels, felling its forests? That you had been knocked about, bruised, but never completely beaten? Huh!

Or would you mention that you had dreamed many dreams; that you had stood shivering on winter nights, watching stars gleaming over white-fanged peaks and savage timber-lands, thinking impossible thoughts, fantastically resolving one day to tell the world of the world's beauty and majesty and wonder? Would you say that you ridiculously hoped—you, an ignorant toiler—to tell of the lives of toilers in the world's lonely outposts, of how they worked and how they lived and of the thoughts which impelled them? Hell!

Why did these damn things torture you? There was the gang you came to town with, why didn't you stay with them? You're a working-stiff, a lumberjack, a common laborer, why not blow in your stake, take in the Skid-road? Why cut yourself off from the only friends you know, and read and think and wonder? Worker you are, and worker you'll probably stay, and what the hell's the difference, anyhow? For the same wild riot that runs through the veins of all lumberjacks come to town, runs through your veins also. The world is made up of stark realities. Your crazy hopes are founded upon the impalpable stuff of dreams . . . damn it all, damn it all . . .

There was a dingy back-room, which stank to high heaven. There were backslappings and exuberant oaths, and raw whiskey that twisted your face as it passed your palate, and burned

like acid all the way down to your surprised and outraged stomach.

There were vague noises, and furtive shapes moving along the half-lighted streets. There were opening and closing doors. There was a feminine voice, honey-sweet, coaxing: "Come right in, Big Boy . . ."

Paul became aware of a smothered, congested sensation, and of sharp pains in his temples. He rolled to his feet, groaning. He had been lying, fully dressed, across the bed in his room. Bright sunlight streamed through the window. His throat was parched and leathery. Nausea gripped him an instant and passed, as he turned on water and drank, hugely. He stood before the mirror of the little dresser, and blood-shot eyes stared back at him. His collar choked him, and he tore off coat and vest and hurled them on the floor, then ripped the collar open. An odor of cheap perfume arose from the front of the shirt. He ripped the shirt from his body. He doused his head with cold water, and then, feverishly, threw off the rest of his clothing and kicked it into a corner. He snatched out his old, battered pack-sack and dumped its contents on the floor. A few minutes later he was fully clothed again; but clothed now in the garb of a lumber-jack. The heavy flannel shirt was wrinkled and weather-stained, the stagged "tin pants" were pitch-spotted. But *this* clothing was clean—clean!

He stood before the front of a "slave-market," employment office for woodsmen. Across a blackboard was chalked: "Sawyers wanted, short-log camp—one dollar per M." "Yeah," Paul growled to the clerk inside, "I'll take the job.

Where is it, and how soon can I get there?"

The fall rains had come and gone, and now brilliant October sunshine beat down upon pine-covered hillsides. There was the sharp odor of riven yellow pine, and the shaper odor of kerosene, with which a cross-cut saw had lately been annointed.

Paul pulled one end of the saw, and Ole Johnson, six feet of rope-muscled Swede, manipulated the other. Sawing by the "bushel"; so much scale, so many dollars; knock 'em down and slash 'em up; hit the ball, or you don't make wages. Swedes are tough, and have single-track minds, so never mind the ache in your back or the sweat in your eyes, but swing and sway, back and forth . . .

The big pine was a tough one. They wanted it to fall up the hill, but it persisted in pinching back on the saw. They pounded wedges into the cut; they sweated and swore. The tree was dangerously close to being cut through, but still it merely trembled, stuck.

Paul flirled sweat from his forehead, and straightened his body a moment, to gaze aloft at the tree's top. He drew deep breaths. The sunlit air was warm, warm as May, yet greatly differing from May's warmth; for sharp night-frosts had imparted to it an electric tang. Above the top-most boughs of the tall pine the sky arched, very clear and very blue—a blue that held within itself no single hint of bitter storms to come. That sky was probably as blue today as it was upon the first day it was spread over the world. The dark green of the pine boughs didn't look bad, either, against that very blue background. The soaring boles of the pines made an army, and, here and there

among them, the alders raised up crimson and gold and scarlet banners. And time itself paused awhile, basking in the sun . . .

"Vell!" Ole's pale eyes were accusing. His upper lip bulged with a fresh charge of "snoose." "Ve don't get dis tree down, ve don't get much scale!"

Paul snatched the falling-axe. "Oh, all right, Ve get scale, you damned square-head, you damned snoose-eater, you damned clod." He ran a thumb over the axe's razor-like edge. Trees

will sometimes fall backward, if you don't watch 'em, fall down hill, when you want 'em up. Like men. But wedges—and will—can force them an inch off balance. Given good steel, an axe may be made very sharp. And given a fairly good mind . . .

The axe described two flashing arcs, and bit out a segment of tough fibres from the undercut. There was a loud crack, a slow, majestic motion, a swooping rush of boughs. "Timber-r-r," Paul howled, defiantly, "up th' hill-l-l!"

UNDERSTANDING

BENJAMIN APPEL

BILL seemed to hound the car up the steep side road where the hill was gashed by the sand contractors. "Think Mulling'll rent his cottage? Say, this is lonely country."

"Just the thing for your family," said Max.

The land was one dip and rise in the violet shadow, that was twilight at the moment. The between-day-and-night colors did "fairy wonders" to the uplands rolling spectral green into rich woods. One could've sworn there'd be a cowbell. "It's sort of lonely," said Bill. "After all—city folk?" He winged the curves like the nighthawk he saw flying. "What cars can pass here?"

Max was stoically rustic. "Farmer flivvers. But you get used to it."

Finally, after the long hunting ride with their voices hallooming in caves of quiet air, the car was sleekly silent as a preying beast. At the crossroads there was a dusty foot-print sense of people. Six or seven mail boxes on tall sticks stood in a circle leagued against

the solitude . . . Mulling's house suggested a clean supper cloth but frugal victuals. Mulling was fixing a rake.

"Hello," said Max. "I've got a possible customer for that cottage of yours." The darkness was a necessary interpreter between Bill and lank Mulling, leaning against the mudguard.

"Thank you Mister Vanderman. Will you gentlemen come out. My cottage is more comfortable than my own home." He was very deferential without being the less a man. He couldn't help being manly or betray his essential pride. For him manliness was not a surface grain but the deep oak. Evidently his life had been strong, stripping him of grace and all pleasant foliage like a tree after wind. Bill had the impression of his own startled eyes opening very wide. After all he had expected tedium. He saw a head, bald except for a monastic fringe behind the ears, built in solid planes except for the wide wavering Celtic smile, and the something sad in Mulling's eyes.

"Very glad to know you," Bill said.

"Suppose we look at the cottage before it gets too dark."

They followed the farmer's hurry-up stride. Twilight was lingering, entranced with its own violet loveliness. Even their quiet movements seemed a hollering in the hush.

The whitewashed cottage sat prim and independent away from everyone, like a retired schoolma'am. "Very restful," said Bill. "And how many rooms?"

Mulling led them a ghostly path through strange rooms. "We've some furniture. Clean as a whistle. Oh, yes, you'd have to use kerosene lamps. There's no electricity . . ."

On the porch Bill looked at the breasted horizon. "Pretty view. All fields and woods but I don't think my wife'd care for outside plumbing or a well."

"The kids could play all day without fear of a car," said Max.

"Like the robins and woodchucks."

"Exactly." He was fixed on Mulling's because he was tired chasing after cottages with Bill.

"Maybe you gentlemen'd care to see the wing in my own place. Not so lonely there."

Bill took a deep breath in the parlor. His grandma had used kerosene lamps but he for one disliked going back to such daguerrotype ancestor-times. In a light warmer than electricity, and ample with thoughts of stouter women than his own slim wife, he sat down in a rocker.

"Milk's selling two cents a quart," said Mulling. "And people aren't taking much to cottages though I've some prospects. I'm not a salesman and if you can't use it or the rooms in the

wing, well, you can't . . . Ma! Will you come in."

The woman was hushed tragedy in the parlor just as the twilight was the hushed delicate suppression of day. This much Bill understood even with Max the landlord and exploiter of Privacy, It's Value (might be swell for him who was compelled to the countryside . . .) Her greywhite hair was parted in the middle and she appeared as if she were a pioneer woman out of an old lithograph. But her strength was youthful, not seasoned, a primitive Indian vigor; a bold confronting of danger and not its philosophic acceptance. And this was remarkable for she wasn't young and acceptance was her role. He glanced at Mulling's clown smile and sad eyes. Poor Mulling had accepted.

Whatever had been the tragedy it had not aged her as it had him. Her flesh was clean and immaculate. Nothing could wash his pure of labor. Her eyes were deeper than their brown. Because she was so strong she could even forget momentarily, laughing as Max laughed. Mulling couldn't forget, smiling as if afraid he'd be interrupted. She was another Lady Macbeth but her resolve was towards the good. She held no ambition but a patience as if of trees. She was so singularly dauntless, so much away from them, that Bill felt as if the men were a humbler breed. There was understanding but not unity so that what she said had undertones they could not grasp, like a pack of dogs listening to a human.

Bill spoke humorously of some attempts at pitching hay but her fibre was not to be dodged with witticisms. Mulling was that haggard type of farmer who love to escape to jokeland.

A merry fellow in his youth? Max gossiped about the Town Board. She rocked up and down, her wondrously alive face a gauntlet thrown to death and dissolution. He understood now why the husband had faded into a background. Her life and her will had absorbed him, the poor laughers.

"I don't think I'll bother with the wing, Mrs. Mulling. The cottage's too lonely and I don't think my wife'd want to share a house with anybody, even with decent folk." It was too bad. They needed the cash. What with no market for crops they probably didn't see two hundred bucks the year. But his wife wanted to rest. Never do for her to live with the Mullings and their problem. "Good-night and I'm sorry."

Max indicated the turns. "We'll try again tomorrow. I like the Mullings."

"What's happened to those two? Why didn't you tip me off? My wife's a rational woman but summer-time's a fairyland time when she makes believe there's no suffering. Why in God's

name did you bring me to those poor devils?"

"Mulling was O. K. before he married her. But his first wife was dead and he began courting. She was thirty-five when she married. For ten years she'd been tending her father; bedridden. And running the farm. Two years before her marriage she was tending her mother in the bargain. Such old folk should die. It'd be pleasanter. And Stumpy, her brother, is a moron and must be watched like a hound. And the sane ones fighting for the acres. A tough life. It was good for her to marry Mulling but bad for him to become one of her family."

"You spring it in one grand clip. You're the nuts. Didn't you think it'd make a difference?" He was appalled at her life, the years of sickrooms lit with kerosene lamps And Max hadn't said a word. Could you beat it? Not a word. He thought of her face and its quiet eternal beauty as of the night . . . It was all casual stuff to Max. That, too, was appalling.

"How's your damn lung, old-timer?" he asked gently.

INDIAN LETTER

LILIAN WHITE SPENCER

I draw my feather pointing up
With the coyote near
For signs that snows are great
And our hunger.
This picture of prairies on fire
Says: we die as grass.
Now, I make an arrow and a star:
They tell you we go east.

After, I put turkey tracks
And a cross
Meaning we seek the place of food
And year-round water.
This heart with an arrow through it
I do last:
To show our courage.

A DAY IN MARCH

AUGUST W. DERLETH

A day in late March, with a wild warm wind blowing from the south, and we are going into the marshes, Hugh and I. It is mid-morning, and the sun is swept by swift-driven clouds, seen white through the budding trees against the blue sky. We have reached the end of the bridge, and descend now into the bottoms, where we come to a fence, across which we must go. Hugh knows a high spot, where we can easily step across; so presently we are within the enclosure, with cows looking at us, watching us with soft eyes.

We follow the fence, stalking a pair of crows, that are quick to know we are not carrying guns, and disdain to be greatly disturbed. They sit together in a tall tree, ruffled up like turkey-cocks, their harsh *caw-caw-caws* hurled into the wind with spring abandon. Abruptly they are away, and at the same moment Hugh sees the owner of this land, a tall, thin-lipped woman, hurrying across an open space toward us. "No trespassing," murmurs Hugh, and I say, "No sign up." "Tore it down," says Hugh, grinning a little, and the woman is upon us, having borne down quite swiftly, as if helped along by the wind. "Well, boys, well, tell me, did you crawl through my fence?" She looks from one to the other of us, one hand busy with a long stick looking much like a gun, the other adjusting her glasses against the wind. "No, we rolled under," I say, and she admits, "Well, that's all right. But I don't like to have my fence weakened. Cows get out and cause me trouble." I venture, "You don't mind our walking along here, do you?" We smile, Hugh and I, hopefully

genial, and she says, "No, no, only, of course, the fence, and you see, the cows . . ." The wind whips her voice away; she catches sight of a cow threshing about in the bushes beyond us, and is gone.

Presently we leave the enclosure, again stepping over the fence, and cut across a sandy glade, where the sunlit silence is broken by the nervous *urr-urr-urr* of the nuthatches, patches of dark blue passing from limb to limb in energetic search for hidden insects, examining bark gone over dozens of times before, cocking inquisitive heads at every likely cranny, and taking a moment to look at us passing below. Thus we come to the railroad, high upon an embankment leading through the river bottoms. We are to follow it.

We top the embankment and look beyond, to where a muffled sound from the pond on the other side has caught our ears. The water is disturbed by a long swelling line curving far into it from one bank. "Muskrat," whispers Hugh. We stand motionless, waiting, hoping it will show itself. Presently it does, a small black nose breaking the calming surface ever so gently, and a pair of eyes looking carefully around for sign of danger. It has no difficulty in seeing us. Still we do not move, and its head comes out slightly farther, turning a little to take us fully in. Are we dangerous? It moves away abruptly, its sleek head riding the water, going placidly across the pond again, still watching. It reaches the other side, rises partly from the water on a tussock before an overhanging stump, and regards us coolly, as much as to suggest that we go on about our business. I

move, and at once it is gone, with a scarcely heard splash, vanishing in the depths beneath the stump, where it has its home.

We go on, making our way along the railroad, noticing a dozen signs of spring—a caterpillar in the sun, and another; a flash of brilliant color where a bluebird swept across the embankment before our eyes; a swarm of tiny flies; the faraway call of a killdeer; a group of waxwings lined up in a cedar limb talking softly to themselves in sleepy voices, their colors bright against the green; the dazzling beauty of a cardinal, singing sweet, sweet notes into the wind. We cross above the Spring Slough, almost black with minnows. A pickerel drifts lazily along beneath, is suddenly aware of us, and is lost in a swirl of mud.

Now we are in the marshes, where the sharp red of the dogwood bushes is almost lost in the grey-white of pussywillows, waving in the wind. On both sides of the embankment, crowding almost upon the rails, they grow, their catkin-laden branches pressing close upon us. They are soft and lovely to touch, and they are most like a living spring-essence, announcing by their presence that the vernal equinox has come. It is beauty to see them waving gently in the wind, their soft silent movement haunted by the sound of the wind rustling through the long dry marsh grass beyond the swaying bushes.

The wind has the spring odor, too. It is heavy with some urgent knowledge, a scent of growing things, of earth rich and moist, of land ready to put forth young things.

A harsh, wild cry sounds from the sky, and Hugh grips my arm. "Don't

move!" he warns me. I look upward, moving my head slowly. A golden hawk is drifting slowly down from the blue, floating majestically downward, its wings held stiffly outward, its head bent with eyes fixed upon the wind-swept marsh, watching for mice. Another cry, and a second hawk hurtles down from the sky. It gathers speed, propelled from the blue straight for the first. A hawk fight? I wonder. But no, they are making love. A quick swerve, a blow avoided, and with joyous cries both hawks mount into the sky, soaring gracefully upward, flying at each other, seeming to tumble about together, far above, two spots of gold in the azure. And again they come down, gently teasing each other, spiralling together down toward the marsh. This time a glade hides them, but presently they are again soaring up. Their attention is suddenly distracted. A crow has blundered upon them. They turn, driving after the luckless bird, whose frightened cries go unanswered, and presently the three of them are but distant specks in the sky. Before we have gone much farther, the hawks are back, flying side by side, their wild cries ringing above the marsh. Then they are lost among the trees.

We come at last to a bridge over a brook, now swollen with the last melted snow, overflowing both banks and brown with mud. Last year's leaves and twigs are swirled past, showing for brief moments on the surface of the water, and then sucked under. From this bridge we look over a broad open space, fringed to the south and west by a line of distant trees, to the north by the brook above which we are standing, and on the east by the railroad. The meadow is hazy with spring in the warm sunlight, and the wind leaves it strangely

motionless, save for a group of forlorn cattails nearby, which are tossed wildly about on their long stalks, with the wind tearing the loose seeds away and flinging them high into the sky. Junco birds and chickadees fly from reed to reed, twittering and chattering incessantly. As we stand there, looking south, a flock of redwings drops from the sky, and immediately the air is heavy with song. They have just come in, apparently, for now first one, then another of them goes about examining the haunts of previous years, just as human beings do,

to see if things have changed. The somnolent sunlight brings forth a bee that careens crazily past us, flying with the wind.

We stand for a few moments more, and turn reluctantly. There will be time to pick some pussywillows. As we go along the homeward trail, the *honk-honk* of north-flying wild geese drifts down to us and is swept away almost at once by the wind. But we can see the geese—a long straggly line of them far up in the blue, an assurance of spring.

IN THE COUNTRY

GRACE MADELINE HOSTER

She was a woman grown
Before she visited me;
She had never known
How beautiful dusk might be—
We waited out to see.

The lark's ecstatic song
Shook the heart in her breast:
It lasted only so long
As the sun on the mountain's crest.

And the splendor of song and sky
Fading die as night drew down
Hurt her deep as a cry
Shut in by a velvet gown . . .
She has gone back to town.

SKI

TED OLSON

We need not envy anything
Climbing on miraculous wing,
Now we too have learned to write
Our shining autograph in flight.

Here where never falcon lifts
His arrogant wings above the drifts
That bloom and burgeon, swell on swell,
The shape of wind made visible,

We take the falcon's highroad, dare
The glittering canyons of the air—
Swooping, wheeling, hovering, shod
Like the sandalled courier god.

What wingless thing could dream to win
This world of frost and porcelain?
It would splinter under feet
A shade less insolent and fleet.

And even we sometimes look back
Along our carven crystal track,
Incredulous it should endure—
Beauty's very signature;

As if the hawk should leave his trail
Printed on the fluid gale;
As if the sky should keep the proud
Sculpture of the chiseled cloud.

Miraculous beyond belief
The way of wings; and fierce, and brief.
The ripening year will soon erase
Every shining arrowy trace.

And none will know again, or guess,
The way we went in happiness.
None will mark if one should stand
Alone where two sped hand in hand,

Or paused a little, breast to breast . . .
April's wind will take the rest.
And that is best. And that is best.

JOURNEY

FRED J. WARD

JOVIS HOLT turned on the light in the rear of the garage and made his way to the single-seated coupe' that was parked in the corner. He pushed it by hand through the big door that opened into the repair shop, swung the jack under the differential and raised the hind wheels off the floor. Methodically he tested the air in all four tires, struck the spare with his fist to see if it was hard. He slung a chain round each of the rear wheels and fastened them with cross springs. Letting the rear down he dragged the jack to the front of the car and set a pair of chains to the front wheels.

The side door of the garage opened and Henry Rourke came stumbling through, accompanied by a gust of wind and a spatter of rain.

"Say, Jovis," he demanded, "you are not trying to go to Montana City tonight?"

Jovis Holt, now sitting in the seat, had just touched his foot to the starter. He nodded his head in the affirmative. The old car gave a roar. Jovis turned off the switch, climbed out of the driver's seat and raised the hood.

Henry Rourke touched him on the arm. "Don't tell me, man, that you are going out in such a storm."

Jovis did not answer.

Henry Rourke caught him still more urgently by the arm. "There isn't a thing you can do. What's happened is likely past all mending. Wait until morning."

Jovis Holt turned lusterless eyes on his friends. "By morning there will be two feet of snow on the divide."

Henry directed a flashlight under the

hood for Jovis, who was now examining the timer. "Why don't you take my car? It's a new car, enclosed—"

"This old car has three inches more clearance. I'm expecting to run into snow."

Henry turned away. He opened the side door of the garage halfway. Stray flakes of snow eddied across the floor. He closed the door and turned back to the man working over the motor.

"If you're bound to go, Jovis, I'll go along."

"The car stands a better chance to get across the ridge road without a load. I'll go alone."

"Have you got plenty of clothes? I'll get you another overcoat." Henry stumbled out through the door.

Jovis emptied the contents of a glycerine bottle into the radiator and added water until the solution rose to the overflow pipe. He examined the gasoline in the rear tank, poured a quart of oil into the crank case. He unlatched the big door and pushed it against the driving wind until it was wide open; climbed into the driver's seat and buttoned the side curtains fast. Before Henry Rourke returned Jovis had driven out into the night.

Jovis turned the car westward through the main part of the village, swung south at the bank corner toward Ash creek. A half-dozen windows at the edge of town glowed dimly in the storm. The car splashed heavily through pools of water that collected in the parallel ruts marking the road up Ash creek. Water was running in rivulets in every coulee crossing. Where the highway traverses the bottoms by the

Crown-W ranch it had gathered in a shallow pond, but the ground beneath the wheels was firm. Jovis pressed on the accelerator until the speedometer registered twenty miles an hour, then twenty-five, finally thirty. At this point he held it steady. Rain beat against the side curtains, drove through the crack at the bottom of the windshield in tiny bubbles. It showed in the twin lights of the headlamps like oblique scratches against the black prairie ahead.

A flood had gathered on Tussler creek at the point where it crosses the road. Jovis brought the car to a stop. He got out, clutched at his heavy cap, and braced his body against the gale. He stood at the edge of the stream, measuring the width of the water with his eye. There are no bridges across Tussler draw, but during the summer an enterprising farmer had hauled three loads of gravel to the roadbed at this point. Whether the gravel had been washed away the man could not tell. Some driftwood had lodged under the fence below the road. Russian thistles, which had rolled into the coulee during the dry summer months, had washed against the driftwood, and now formed a dam, over which the muddy waters were pouring.

Jovis unstrapped the shovel from the rear of the car and using it as a balancing staff, climbed perilously out on the lower wire a third of the way across. Bracing himself against the wind, which tore at every loose fold of his clothes and drove the streaming rain against his face, he jabbed at the thistles until he had cut a narrow path for the water to pour through. He set the blade of the shovel under the foremost piece of drift and pushed, but failed to move it. He pried at a second piece, which also

held fast. The third piece, however, gave way with a suddenness that almost tumbled him into the water.

Jovis Holt climbed back to the edge of the stream and again measured the width of the flow with his eye. He strapped his shovel onto the back of the car, got in and started the motor, then threw the clutch into low. The car splashed, hesitated, gave a lurch as the hind wheels caught the mud and gravel on the bottom, shook itself out on the opposite bank.

The road leads into higher ground south of Tussler draw. Jovis thought the air was getting colder. Although the wind still ran high, the rain had diminished. The trail was firmer, for there is sandy soil among the buttes. Again he accelerated the car to thirty miles an hour.

At the Emmet Mills corner he was brought to a sudden stop. A four-wire fence had been strung directly across the way. Jovis now recalled that there had been trouble between Emmet Mills and the commissioners of the county about a right of way, and that to vent his resentment the owner had fenced in this corner of his land. To get past, the driver had to detour down into the bottoms and cross Tussler draw in two places.

Jovis again unstrapped the shovel from the rear of the car. With the point he pried staples loose from several posts on both sides of the road. He laid a stone on the loosened wires to hold them to the ground so that he could drive over them. The air was now bitter cold. The rain had ceased. A strip of moon gleamed between two flying clouds.

From this point the road winds among the buttes to the higher ground known

locally as the Sheep Mountain Pines. At the end of a mile the driver had to get out and take down the fence where it shut off the road at the southern boundary of the Mills property. The sky was completely overcast again. It had grown warmer. The odor of storm was still in the air. Jovis took up his thirty-mile gait along the deserted road, as he approached the last climb to the Yellowstone divide, within twenty miles of Montana City. He looked at his watch under the light of the dash lamp. Nine o'clock. The night was completely black.

A gust of rain spattered against the windshield. This was followed a moment later by a shower of snow pellets which pounded off the hood like soft balls of hail. The ground halfway up the Sheep mountain hill was covered with snow. The flakes swirled in the light of the car. The wheel tracks of the prairie road were half filled. Jovis felt the car slowing down. He shifted into second; then into low. As he neared the divide the wind increased in velocity. The storm had turned into a whirlwind of snow, which clung like sticky plaster to the cowl. Every hundred yards he had to get out and wipe off an area of windshield big enough to see through.

The Yellowstone ridge, seen by day, is a naked stretch of gumbo hill marked here and there by a tiny cedar no taller than a man. From the top of the climb on the north, to the point where the road begins to wind its way down into the Cherry Flats, is scarcely more than a mile.

The car lurched along this narrow trail like a blind thing. Sticky snow formed on the windshield so fast that clear vision was impossible. Jovis felt a swift wrench at the wheel as the ma-

chine skidded on an unseen obstruction. He brought the car to a stop and got out to look. He had a feeling that he was turned, but whether he was now facing to the right or to the left of his true direction he could not tell. He examined the land in the light of the lamps. Two dim marks could be discerned on the left. He started down this trail but stopped again, for the wind, which should have been on his right, was directly behind him. Again he got out to examine the way. The trail took a turn to the right a few feet in front of the car. Reassured, Jovis cleared the windshield and attempted to follow the marks of the road, but he had gone scarcely a dozen rods when he felt the nose of the machine dip suddenly downward. There was a violent jolt as the front wheels stopped dead against a bank.

Jovis again got out of the driver's seat. The first glance at the land in the flood of the headlights told him where he was. He had left the road within a few yards of the turn to the Cherry creek hill and had followed the old trail that led to the gravel pit on Sheep mountain, which road builders had opened up the summer before in repairing the highway below the divide. He tried to back out, but the wheels spun on the steep sides. The trap he had stumbled into was not more than twenty feet below the level surface of the ridge. The way leading down to it was not very steep, but it ended in a two-foot drop where the gravel had been dug away.

Tightening his sheepskin jacket around him Jovis began smoothing down the abrupt sides of the depression with his shovel. He worked without pausing for half an hour. By quick

manipulation of the low gear and the reverse he got the car into a rocking motion, back and forth, gaining momentum for the back ward scramble out of the gravel hole. But when he opened the throttle for the final trial he felt the wheels lose their hold. The machine stopped half-way out. He turned the motor off.

On the side of the gravel pit there was a hump which had caught the running boards and raised the rear wheels off the ground. It would take three hours to work the frozen earth down smooth enough to allow the car to make its way up, and by that time the place would be filled with snow.

Jovis now remembered that a tunnel had been dug beneath this gravel pit, so that trucks could be backed in and then loaded through a trap door. With his flashlight he examined the ground at the edge of the hill. To the right of the tunnel the hillside fell away almost perpendicularly to the old trucking road. If he could get down to that point he might make his way along the trail which the road workers had followed to the main highway at the foot of Sheep mountain.

He dug the gravel and snow from under the running-board and started his motor again. It was easy to get the car moving into the pit. He began working the machine back and forth again, gradually turning it so that it faced westward toward the edge of the hill. Guided only by his sense of direction, for he could not see what lay beyond the rim of the gravel pit, he drew the car to the right of the tunnel. The wheels ground in the loose gravel and the front end of the car plunged over the bank.

There was a grinding sound when the running-board and the frame caught on

the edge. The car stopped, hung a moment, as if in mid air, and then gave a sudden plunge headlong down the hill. Jovis caught the brake, but yet the machine gained momentum as it fell. He could see nothing except the whirlwind of snow.

But as suddenly as the fall had started, the car stopped. It was not the sudden stop caused by an obstruction, but rather as if a brake had been applied quickly. Jovis was thrown against the windshield. The snow had drifted under the hill and now lay in a heavy fold, which caught the car and brought its wild career to a halt. From this point downward the slope is more gentle. He was able to ease the machine to the right along the base of the hill. A sudden bump told him that he had reached the road again. He knew the divide over Sheep mountain hill had been crossed.

It is ten miles from Sheep mountain to the railroad at Montana City. By a freakish whim of the treacherous prairie climate, the snow lay deeper south of the divide. Jovis could hear the grinding sound it made as the chained wheels bit into it. Depressions were filling rapidly under the swirling storm. The parallel ruts which had once been traced by wandering sheep wagons and now served these isolated settlers as an automobile road to the railroad, were drifted level with snow. The car crept ahead in low gear. But in the swale across Cherry creek the wheels spun without moving forward.

Jovis threw the gear into reverse. He backed the car until he was out of the deepest part of the drift, then swung the wheel to the right and pulled the car onto the vacant prairie. Out of the wheel tracks the snow was not so deep.

He managed to cross the lowland in safety.

The driver now kept to the prairies, guiding himself as well as he could in the darkness and storm, by the marks of the road to his left. The prairie is flat for five miles beyond Cherry creek; and the wind had kept it fairly well swept of snow. Progress here was more rapid. Jovis held his watch under the dash lamp—twenty minutes to two.

He had barely put away his watch when he saw a vague nothingness appearing out of the storm. A second later he felt himself falling as though the earth had been pulled out from under him. The front of the car dove downward, and then came to rest. In a flash Jovis knew that he had plunged off the cutbank by the mouth of Mink creek.

He got out and waded down into the ditch in front of the car. The wheels were entirely buried in snow, which came up even with the headlights. There was no use trying to shovel in a storm like this, for the wind was piling snow faster in the draw than he could shovel it out. Jovis began to scoop away with his mittened hands the snow which obscured the light of the lamps. Of a sudden it gave way. The car was swept downward into the bottom of the draw and, standing deep in the snow, Jovis could not escape. When the car came to rest he was wedged into the snow under it.

The car was lying on its side with a wheel resting across his leg. The snow was soft and sticky, else the bone would have been broken. Jovis wriggled his face to the surface and by working his body was able to get the one free leg and his two arms applied to the bottom of the car, but in such a position he could not raise the machine. His efforts

buried him deeper. Working his free foot until he could reach under the wheel which held him fast he began digging at the snow under the wheel with his shoe. How long he kept at this task he did not know, but in time he was able to twist his leg under the wheel, finally to pull it free. He wormed his way from under the machine.

His leg was numb and his clothing was soaked with the water squeezed out of the snow. Here under the lee side of the cutbank there was scarcely any wind. Great fluttering snowflakes were being swept into the coulee by the gale which howled above its brim. Jovis pounded his arms and legs to restore the circulation.

He pulled a knife from his pocket and managed to open the blade with chattering teeth. He cut loose the curtain behind the driver's seat. From the tool kit he took a heavy wrench, and using it as a lever tore loose the ball-and-socket connection between the top and the frame of the windshield. With a pair of pliers he pulled the cotter pins which held the two top bolts to the side of the seat. With a jerk on these bolts the top came free.

He dragged the top to the side of the car on the floor of the coulee and with the shovel dug away the snow from under it. He placed the cushion under this improvised shelter, which was now free from snow and almost completely sheltered from the storm. He turned off the gasoline at the tank and wading to the front of the machine raised the hood and feeling about with numb fingers located the connecting nut that held the pipe line to the vacuum tank. When the nut was unscrewed he returned to the gas tank and pulled the copper pipe until it was completely free. He curved

this pipe so that it led to the ground just in front of the car top.

He climbed inside his shelter and with his knife made a long slit in the seat cushion, from which he pulled out three handfuls of wadding. He laid them at the end of the feed pipe. He was working now as he had worked in the garage before starting on this journey, without hesitation but without undue haste. He climbed outside and gave a quarter turn to the spigot on the gasoline flow.

He returned to his shelter and held the end of the gas pipe over the pile of waste until by bending over it he could catch the odor of gasoline. He pulled off his water-soaked gloves and rubbed his hands on the sheepskin lining of his jacket until they were fairly dry. Reaching again into the slit in the cushion he extracted another handful of waste. With this he wiped the wrench carefully. From an inner pocket he brought out a match, and although his fingers were stiff and his hand refused to stop shaking he managed to strike it on the dry handle of the wrench. He held it to the pile of waste, which immediately burst into flame. When his fire was going he pushed it farther out from under the car top so that the fumes were carried away.

Although the front of his shelter was open, he was now almost completely screened from wind, and the gasoline fire warmed the inside of the place. He held his stinging hands to the blaze, spread his wet mittens on the edge of the cushion. He pounded his leg, which was still numb. A feeling of warmth and comfort came stealing over him. Housed like this, a man could stay out a blizzard two days or more. His head nodded.

Jovis Holt came as abruptly awake

as a man who has a sudden dream of falling into a great darkness. The fire had melted the snow about the entrance of his shelter and the water had collected in a shallow puddle at the base of the flame. He pulled on his steaming mittens, rebuckled the high tops of his overshoes and drew the collar of his sheepskin jacket up about his ears. He cut a round piece of celluloid from one of the side curtains, rolled it up, and stuffed it into his pocket.

Outside, the wind had not abated a bit of its fury. The coulee was now drifted from bank to bank. He heaved himself through the deep snow to the opposite side. There he stood in the full sweep of the gale. By holding the strip of celluloid in front of his face to shield his eyes from the flying snow, he could look momentarily into the gloom ahead. With the stoicism of one who has discounted the meager chances of his gamble Jovis started afoot across the empty prairie. If the wind did not change direction, four miles with the snow stinging at his right cheek would take him to Montana City.

There was no trace of a road underfoot, no trace of house or light anywhere about him, no sign of moon or star in the sky—nothing but a vague whiteness of whirling snow. Once he detected a rising crescendo in the howl of the storm. Turning slightly to the right he came suddenly upon a tree. It was a pine tree scarce taller than a man. This was the only tree for miles on Cherry creek flat. It was called Lone Pine and it stood out as a landmark for the honkyockers of that region. The trunk was bent almost double now. The top branches were fluttering like the ribs of an umbrella turned inside out by the wind.

For a moment Jovis leaned against the swaying trunk and then trudged on. To his numbed consciousness there came the realization that he had been traveling too much to the left. He righted his course. How long he fought against the storm he never knew. For to him all sense of distance had been plumbed into a measureless void and time had locked hands with eternity.

The Munyon residence in Montana City is on the east side of the railroads in the direction of the Cherry creek flat. Mrs. Munyon had risen at six-thirty, more through habit than necessity, for the storm which had been raging all night was still blowing, and little could be done today. She was adding coal to the kitchen fire when there came a heavy knocking at the front door. It was not the staccatto tap of the polite visitor. It was a dull insistent pounding.

A man fell into the room as she turned the knob. He was covered from head to foot with snow.

"Frank," she screamed. "Come quick. There is a man here. He's all white. I think he is going to die."

Her husband, startled out of a morning nap, helped her drag the limp form into the room.

"God have mercy," he exclaimed, as he brushed the snow off the still face. "It's Jovis Holt from the north country. I heard yesterday they had telephoned for him."

But Jovis Holt did not die. He woke in a strange room of utter whiteness. The sun outside now flooded the windows with the reflected glory of a sea of snow. There was a white bandage on each hand. Two women in nurse's habit were standing close to his bedside.

There was another bed close to his. On it lay a woman as pale and colorless as the white walls of the room. Jovis caught a quick, grateful flicker of recognition from this woman, but now in the vague unreality of the situation the recognition did not seem to matter.

He closed his eyes and heard one of the white-clad figures speak to the woman on the bed opposite: "Your husband is here, and now you're going to get well."

Jovis Holt knew in his heart that she would get well. In common with all humble folk, he had learned the strength of woman when lying in childbirth, just as he had known how to gauge his own skill against the raging futility of the prairie storm.

The nurse spoke, but Jovis did not answer. He turned his head to the wall, and tears of complete exhaustion rolled down his cheek.

"See there," the woman whispered to her companion. "He's crying, because—"

The woman was wrong. Ordinary living does not wrench a tear from such a man as Jovis Holt. He was still enveloped in a feeling of utter isolation.

SAGE

JAY ELLIS RANSOM

I want to see sage . . . desert sage . . .
Stretching to the horizon;
Silver sage in sunrise light,
Gray sage under noonday suns,
Purple sage in the purple distances
Under the sunset skies.

I want to see prairies
Rolling away to the north,
Rolling away to the east, to the south,
Prairies extending limitless,
Rolling away to the west . . .
Prairies of sage.

I want to feel winds
Sweeping across the plains,
From the vast horizon,
From the empty skies . . .
Sweeping across the prairies,
Bearing the breath of sage.

PRAIRIE GRAVE

RUTH M. CLAYTON

Beneath this old and rugged Higgens Pine,
As bone and dust sleeps one small pioneer.
Cloud-shadows and the moon and sun have passed
In silence overhead year after year.

No marble slab speaks with a chiseled tongue
A name, "Our darling," date of birth and death,
But winds in grass and through the gnarled tree-bows
Sing requiems above with sobbing breath;

For once as oxen rested by this tree,
A father made a cradle under ground,
And with his aching hands replaced the sod
To hide from wolves his little new-made mound.

Alone beneath the light of quiet stars
While all the noisy prairie-creatures slept,
A mother with her ear against the grass
Kept watch throughout the silent night and wept.

Following the trail the morning traced
Westward with the shadows—looking back,
She saw the pine in stalwart silhouette,
Grow small beside the narrow wagon track.

PRAIRIE DEATH

DONNE MONTANA STEVENS

Heavy oxen
moving
slow miles
across the plain.
Black feet
prodding
gumbo baked by sun.
Dirt-sodden covers
over cayuse.
Weather-warped wheels
cracking, grating
through the dust.
Black tins clanking
on a crude log-shelf.
Sage brush
flattened
beneath the heavy tramp—
clamp—clamp—tramp—
of black oxen feet.

A sturdy father silent—
leading oxen on;
A hot sun scorching
his tired set face.
Covered wagons creeping
over lonely space.
A big-boned woman
with a child against her breast—
a prairie-born babe
dying at her breast.

Heat, hunger, jogging
over cactus-cursed
prairie.

Night shadows soften
bleeding human hearts.
•Blue stars comfort
hurt and aching hearts.
Heavy oxen halted—
firewood sought.
Still child laid
in a crude death-box.
Virgin soil disturbed
for a new life
dead.
Night shadows thicken.
Stars alone
console a grief.

Heavy oxen
yoked
to moving ugly homes.
Prairie mother parting
from a new-dug grave.
Barren plains behind—
Lonely space above—
Man and woman turning
to wilderness ahead.

Heavy oxen moving
slow miles across the plain.

THE COFFIN BOAT

HOWARD MCKINLEY CORNING

I.

ELSE Tage was a nurse and administrator of potent herbs. The whole countryside, when sickness urged, called her from her cabin far north in the Sixes timber. Always she would respond, bringing her well-worn reticule of herbs and magic—a bag made of elk skin and endowed with little short of everlasting life.

The minute she entered the presence of sickness members of the harrowed family stepped aside and, given over to hope, folded their hands in their laps with pure patience. Meanwhile Else Tage moved about the room, a mediator between life and death. Surely if she could kill cougars she could quell the spirits of illness. And she did.

On this occasion she tended Linda Newlin, sick of a mountain fever in the cabin of Garce Newlin, midway of the crooked Sixes valley. Mountain fever is not to be fooled with; few ever recover, rare though the illness is in the damp density of the Oregon coast forests.

In the late April twilight, Else Tage, her elongated shadow nervously blackened against the far wall, moved from the glowing fireplace with a bowl of gruel compounded of barley shorts and deer's foot jelly, into which she had mixed certain secret herbs. Her movement was toward the dark quilted bed whereon, carefully wrapped about, her patient lay. As she crossed the room a knock was heard upon the outer door.

On this particular evening the Newlin cabin was already too well attended by visiting neighbors, so that when

this further knock occurred, Else Tage, in her temporary authority, turned assertively about to obtain full command of the situation. Back of her, before the open fireplace, crouched Aunt Hannah Berger, a small figure in her own cabin but an expansive soul whenever she escaped from it. She too looked up, spoon in hand, where she had removed it from the kettle.

"Good heavens!" she exclaimed, "ain't there a-plenty here now?" Her words made a small dripping sound, moist and colorless.

In the darkened corner, among an assortment of odd boxes and meal sacks, crouched two of the younger Newlin children; a tow-headed girl of five who answered to Nance, and a boy. Dant, scarcely seven, square-bodied and promising a strength of development the rest of the family lacked. The two were so deeply lost in the darkness behind Aunt Hannah's bottle-green sateen dress as to be indistinguishable except when the fire jumped into enlarged flame under the drive of a rainy wind.

"Ain't there a-plenty here now?" Aunt Hannah repeated, looking narrowly across the hearth where Garce Newlin sat with his customary speechlessness against the wall. His face showed very white. He made no movement, not seeming to hear her query. Beside him, her great oval eyes fixed on the "Cougar Woman," his second daughter, June, stood printing her bare knee against her father's coarse trouser leg. She was nearly nine and the only one of the children with dark hair, the chestnut rings of which lay tangled

about her brow and over her olive cheeks.

"Daddy—" She commenced to speak.

But before she could continue she heard, from the deep-shadowed door, the repeated sound of rapping knuckles. Her parent heard and, rising, drew the slow movements of booted feet across the floor. Holding to her father's arm, the girl pivoted on one heel to follow him. The cabin's occupants were at attention as he pulled the outer door open.

A gust of rain-sprinkled wind spat into the man's face as he somberly bade the visitor enter; a cumbersomely tall man in from the whipping rain and the night, all but utterly black. He pushed the door to behind him.

"She ain't no better," Garce informed the newcomer. And as he returned to the chair he vacated, "There's a block; set." He indicated it with a kick of his toe.

Jed Miller, usually rotund of manner and speech, was somewhat displeased with this single-voiced welcome. What if his coming was the surprise of all surprises, should it render all speechless?

Before him Else Tage, with a meaningless "grumph," her beaded eyes sighting down the long crooked nose of her back-thrust head, her hair polished like lighted shadow, bowed to the service of her prostrate patient. The sick woman lay almost in darkness, and although she ate sparingly of the doctored food offered by the claw-like hands of the Cougar Woman she did so obliviously.

"Ef it wasn't fer gettin' her t' take the cure-all I'd not feed her a bite—not a crow's bite. Fever's gotta burn itself out, it has. But it's the cure-all what does it. I allus used to tell Henry

the biggest fire will burn itself out." (Henry was her husband who had broken his back). Apparently she was giving her patient no credit for hearing her remarks, but uttered them, in her usual throaty manner, for the assembled audience.

Presently the woman would have no more of the gruel and sank back among the sweaty quilts. "I don't see, girl, where you could of got it. It ain't common."

"Ain't she some better?" the pale voice asked, where Aunt Hannah stood.

"Can't say as she is," the firm reply came. "She ate a little, an' that's the strongest git-up I ever mixed. She's got strength, she can stan' it. * * * No, can't say as how she is. But ef she don't mend right short now, there's only one thing more t' do. An' it'll be you, Jed Miller, as does it."

Authority had spoken; there was attention in the room; it was as though Jed Miller, out of the stormy night and the imprecations of a hearsay-clouded past, had entered upon judgment.

There was a stir and a grunt from across the room, the speaking of a strong voice, somewhat modulated but still evidently harsh: "Kill a cougar."

"The very las' thing to do, Jed Miller. There's nothin' can beat the gall o' a cougar fer poison-killen purposes, like fever." This was Else Tage's last, most effective remedy, the use of which was a serious admission.

Under this declaration Garce Newlin sat motionless. He knew why Jed Miller was there: that once loving the woman Garce had married he held still a sentimental interest in her—what else could it be?—An interest that might bear some hidden meaning. He knew the talk of the valley. Ordinarily Jed

would have nothing to do with Garce, and the latter never urged his friendship. But now that Linda was taken a-bed with what was generally an unrecoverable illness, Miller used it for a reason to enter the Newlin cabin. And Garce tolerated him in the way strong souls tolerate the unpleasant; by disregard. Jed had actually taken to looking after Garce's chores for him. He had a decent streak, though it was hard to reach. Still, inwardly he hated Newlin. Not that he could ever have made the husband for Linda that Garce had been—everybody said that. And there were other things people said; tales that came up through the years . . .

An interval of silence followed Else Tage's ultimatum. The household waited Miller's reply.

"You used a wolf onet, Else," Jed parried.

"Won't do." The reply was curt.

Forward in the room Garce surveyed the fire and presently, as the gusty rain poured like a sudden whipping of dry needles over the shakes, motioned the boy Dant to throw a length of wood on the blaze. Crouching before the blaze the small figure of Aunt Hannah continued to stir from time to time each of two kettles hanging from the blackened hooks over the glowing coals. Yet there seemed no eagerness for food in any of the cabin's occupants.

"Can't recall you ever refusin' me afore, Jed Miller. What'd yuh come fer?" Else Tage stepped preemptorily into the center of the floor. There she rested her stringy arms akimbo on her angular hips, her frame encased in a skirt of dark homespun trimmed up and down the seams with strips of peltrie. Her appearance uttered the wilderness.

Still non-committal, Miller sat on his block of wood, his gray form pressed hugely back against the chinked logs. It was the man's most studious posture. The Cougar Woman turned about and left him to arrive at his moment.

From the fireplace Aunt Hannah had removed the larger of the kettles, and motioning the girl over to assist her the two began setting the dishes of food on the slab table that stood back from the center of the room. Presently the woman brought the smaller of the kettles and centering it among the dishes announced that the men might eat. Jed Miller rose first, but thinking better waited until Garce had taken his place, then sat down at the far end. "Set," Garce said, his first word in some time. A short man, Jack Defell, came forward out of the shadows, seating himself between Garce and Jed. The children stood aside, fidgeting until their turn should come.

Presently Else Tage, after examination of her silent patient, seated herself beside Garce Newlin. She was perhaps the one woman in all the Lower Coast country who felt herself superior to any man, asserting that belief and gaining respect.

Outside, the rain had become an incessant drench, beaten by the wind. A loose shake rattled. Along the west wall the rain stain began to creep through where the chinking had loosened. At the table the candle flickered faint light over the faces of the four, who ate with subdued responses. Aunt Hannah, waiting until the second table, watched the woman on her fevered bed.

Now from across the shadowed room the suffering, scarce-conscious woman drew a prolonged and audible sigh that was instantly snatched into the mean-

ingless wind sucking at the creaking cedars without. Else Tage moved swiftly to Linda's side, bending angularly over her patient. At once the room's listeners heard the woman repeat an all-but-inaudible incantation of words, supposedly magic. As she did so she applied her horny hands to the delicate fevered brow. Her black eyes peered down a long time. Then with a commanding gesture she swept about.

"Jed Miller, when do I git that cougar gall?"

The words came sharp and hard. Besides, Else Tage had power to place a witch-spell on any person who crossed her authority. Even Jed, hardened and masterful as he was, felt a cringing tremor course down his stiff spine as he contemplated what fate might be his should he refuse. Yet, what hunter could hope for a cougar on a night like this?

Jed Miller rose from his unfinished meal and lifting his weather-coat from a peg on the wall turned toward the door.

"I'll have t' stop by m' place an' get m' 30-30," he drawled. "Ef I don't git th' cougar I'll be makin' a coffin, come daybreak."

The door was jerked open and with a muscular lunge the speaker issued into the wind-whipped rain. He cursed at his uncertain footing in the slippery dooryard.

The meal was cleared away and a death-like inner hush settled over the watching household. Crisis was immanent in Linda's illness, so much the Cougar Woman averred. If Jed failed to return with the gall of a fresh-killed mountain lion, daybreak would bring mourning. The gall of a cougar!

"Never seed it hang on like of this,"

Else Tage affirmed, for the moment relinquishing her dictatorial reserve.

"Does Jed stan' t' git his animal afore daybreak?" Aunt Hannah ventured, with concerned and sympathetic voice.

"There ain't nothin' else will pull 'er through," came the laconic reply.

Garce sat stoically before the waning fire. Twice he stared into the shadow against the wall. Presently he rose and without a word, buttoned his weather garments soundly about him and sloshed forth into the night. Up trail a piece he would turn off toward Elk Prairie. A cougar gall, he kept thinking, a cougar gall. On a night like this!

II.

Out in the downpour of the night Jed Miller trudged, his mind darkening. Rain dripped from his hat brim and his set lips were moist with it. But the inclemency could not dampen the mounting wrath within him, a wrath his striding only increased.

A cougar gall to save the life of the woman he could never have, so long as she were Garce Newlin's wife! Blackly he thought, it was Garce he would like to make a coffin for—with Linda living after him. If he should get the gall—and she lived . . . He would have to get his gun.

But, as he thrust ahead among the dripping cedars, his reasoning told him that if he got the cougar and the potency within it proved effective and the woman lived she would be living for Garce. And he hated Garce; hated Garce because he had Linda, would continue to have her. But on the other hand, if he just failed to secure the animal, failed completely to return, Linda would die—and Garce would be

without her, too; there would be no Linda for Garce to be loving.

"I'll jes tell Else I couldn't find none. Hell, it's stormin' down 'nough, ain't it! Can't jes git a cougar any time yuh want to." Couldn't hardly 'spec' t' git one a night like of this." His words gritted between his teeth.

Presently, as he thought further of Else Tage and the direful powers she was known to exert, his mind clouded over with apprehension. He'd have to do some tall talking to keep Else in the dark,—“Now that I ain't goin' t' git the cougar,” he finished doggedly.

“I'll jes fool 'er,” he thought; “Come daybreak I'll fetch out an' start the coffin. Jes what I told her I'd do, come I didn't git the animal. She won't be askin' me none then.”

With this final decision of mind he continued on the trail toward his home clearing along the loud Sixes. As he trod he kept thinking of Else Tage—if Linda should die!

III.

Under the hot morning sun Jed Miller hacked away at the inside of a log. It was nearly as long as he and had been lopped off flat on four sides. The underside, where it rested on two sawed log-buttocks, was slightly narrower than the top surface. The man's swarthy face twitched beneath his unseen eyes where his hat was pulled over them and a sinister gloom lay over his merciless mouth and his pock-marked face. Presently he laid down the maul and applied an axe with vicious strokes, in turn to pause, push back his hat and wipe his brow in vengeful meditation, “Things'll be some diff'rent now,” he muttered.

A crackle in the brush, a snapped twig. The worker's attention was

strained. He looked up in apprehension. Instantly he thought of Else Tage and immediately he was divided between concern and fury.

But he knew well enough it was Else, saw suddenly that it was she. Her resolute, angular figure thrust forward toward him, her moccasined feet moving almost silently beneath her picturesque garments, her fur cap surmounting her stringy black hair. Miller could see the dark centers of her eyes. She carried an axe. The man suddenly strove to appear busied.

Each avoided a greeting; the newcomer broke into words, few but crisply uttered.

“Ain't no need of it, Jed. Garce went out an' brung in a cougar gall las' night, after you left. Linda's took a turn. She won't be needin' no coffin.”

Jed Miller laid down his axe without change in his dark expression. “Yeah!” He reached his horny hands for adz and maul. “Yeah!” he repeated hoarsely. This was certainly an unexpected turn; he hadn't looked for Linda to recover without his aid. She would be living for Garce, then, after all. Well, he reasoned, he wasn't going to be shown up by Else; he was going to keep face.

“Well, reckon a fella can be usin' of it fer a boat, cain't he?” he bellowed forth, swinging the axe and driving the blade in deep.

The Cougar Woman was taking no note of his surly defiance. “Heered yuh hacking away out her, ever sence daybreak.”

Jed looked at her, tried to judge the depth of meaning behind her few words. He began to feel uneasy.

“Started kinda early, didn't yuh?” she continued, thrusting the accusation toward him where she stood, hands on

hips and her narrow arms akimbo. She had dropped the axe she carried; it lay at her feet.

To each statement Jed Miller refused reply. He pulled his hat lower and began to take up his tools.

Then complete accusation came. "Jed Miller, yuh never hunted fer no cougar las' night. Yuh said if yuh didn't git none yuh was goin' to make a coffin. Yuh knew all the time yuh wasn't goin' t' git no gall."

With these words the man turned his scowling face blackly upon her. His wrath had mounted to a pitch of defensive courage. "It war stormin', warn't it? Well, ain't that a reason?" Disturbed as he nonetheless was, he wasn't going to let Else back him down; he was going to be one man who could defy her and hold face.

Else stood her ground with laconic coolness. "All same, you're makin' a coffin, Jed, what yuh knew yuh was goin' t' do." The words were smiting and final.

But Jed would not be shaken. Repeating his intention of "usin' of it fer a boat" he lay to with maul and adz, the bright chips spinning out into the sun slants where they fell among the dew-drenched ferns and sallal. Here and there a large one showed a clear surface like a miniature gravestone. After numerous strokes he paused.

Into the pause Else Tage intruded: "Yuh might need this here axe I brung. I sharpened it fer yuh." Immediately she turned and was walking into the dark forest, beyond the cleared space.

"Hell!" Miller spat. He picked up the axe. It was sharp.

In a nearby spruce a woodpecker rapped like a man nailing down the lid of death.

IV.

It was a soft, unduly warm morning, after all the evil weather that had preceded it. Garce Newlin sat on a log-butt before his squat cabin fitting a new helve into an old axe head. His pale, shaven features were whitened by the morning sun that sprawled in over the tree tops. As he worked he glanced about him from time to time.

Three noisy and grimy children charged about the clearing that opened out on a muddy, rutted strip of road. A dozen scrawny hens moved about the clearing.

Shortly Garce was roused from his leisurely labor by the approach of the Cougar Woman, coming up from the river. Every several days she came back to the house of illness where her sharp figure and commanding presence had become familiar. She came up now, her fur cap fitted hugely over her stringy hair. In one hand she carried a coil of rope, the loose end switching against her fur-seamed skirt. She strode up to Garce, busied with the axe.

"Well, here yuh are, settin' outside, lookin' like work again. Linda's feelin' some better, I reckon. Well, reckon they ain't a better prescriber in these here'bouts than Else Tage. No there ain't." With self-appraisal she paused.

The pale Newlin lay aside the axe. "Pretty clost call, I guess, sure 'nough. Oh, she's feelin' fair again . . . right smart better." He nodded his assertion. "Trying t' get a bit o' work done."

The Cougar Woman saw no reason for response. Before her the pale man sat as if within him there were little urge toward industry. Spreading his white hands out before him he looked from these toward the sheds where his chil-

dren scuffled: "Sorta lost out a piece . . ." he repeated.

"Plenty," the woman acceded now, placing one moccasined foot on the log-butt and leaning forward. "And Jed was makin' of the coffin, too." Her thin lips creased. The black deepened in her eyes.

Garce smiled palely. "Guess he'd like t' a buried her, a'right . . ." And then, "Lotta spunk in the Newlin tribe."

A shoat ran wildly through the disordered clearing, two unkempt children at its heels. As they raced they overturned a low rick of wood, the animal squealing in fright.

With this Else Tage came out of her piercing study. "Well, it's all the same to Miller; he's using the box fer a scow. Sez he'll tote his three hawks down river t' Shumway's day after t'morrer . . . save walking the weight off 'em on the trail. Crusty front that Miller can put up w'en he's a mind to. I come through his clearing jus' now an' he bellered it at me."

Newlin scrutinized his informant. "Figger I'll paddle down t' Shumway's in a day 'r two m'self. Might foller Jed; like t' see 'im make the trip; sorta celebration like." And he drew his drawn white face into a cadaverous smile. The Cougar Woman joined his mood with a sardonic grin. "An' yuh won't be knowing how big a celebration like it'll be fer yuh, Garce."

"Ain't got no grudge agin any one, have yuh, Else?"

At this half-query the woman's thin lips set; without further statement she brushed by him into the open cabin. Soon he heard her pitched voice in converse with his wife.

Beyond the clearing the sound of flow-

ing water came up to mingle with the wind-sound of the trees.

V.

Two days passed.

Trailing green moss, strung from cedar boughs overhead, slapped damply into Garce Newlin's face as he swung down the bank to his tethered boat among the leaning alders. The Sixes river purred in its noisy manner. He seated his rangy body in the unsteady craft. Picking up the idle oars he fitted them into the locks and waited.

Twenty minutes passed, during which he sat motionless save for the boat's bobbing. No sun shown through to dapple his face, or the water's. Overhead the sky rolled like a leaden evil thing, heaving toward some unpredictable cataclysm. A downpour seemed imminent. At times the passive Garce gazed at the threatening sky.

Then the tensivity of contemplation was suddenly over. A dark cumbersome object shot forth from an upper curve riding the river's current; an object bobbing wildly and headlong, thrusting nearer and nearer. Another instant and it clearly evidenced itself; it was Jed Miller in his converted log scow with its cargo of three squealing hogs. The four crowded the craft's capacity.

Garce Newlin grappled the oars of his small boat and with vigorous applications tugged out toward midstream. Easing into the current he called out as the voyager came on: "Ho, Jed! How's the new boat behavin'? Kind of a speeder, ain't she?"

"Y'u'll have t' tug some t' keep up with me," Jed Miller shouted back over the noise of the water, gesticulating with a long spare pole, his sole implement of navigation. "I'm agoin' t' git thar with the current."

The spare Newlin nosed out into the driving flood, a full half of his boat's power lost, cutting as it did across the precipitation of water that flowed swiftly and silkily along the craft's sleek sides. He bent his back to the labor of following the fleeing, scowling Jed, who was suddenly and imperceptibly lost around a green angle of the lower Sixes.

But now, upstream, a laggard in the troubled wake of the coffin boat, another rowing craft of slight but governable proportion, came on. The three formed a wilderness regatta. At its oars, a large fur cap already pushed back from her hot brow, Else Tage, a cramped, angular figure, labored and watched the river where the strange craft had preceded and disappeared. She saw, also, Garce Newlin swing into the stream ahead of her.

The three bobbed on toward Shumway's ranch situated a scant mile from surf, the Pacific some three miles farther distant.

When Newlin saw the heavy scow was being carried at a pace his light craft could not equal he eased up on his strokes, in this way permitting Else Tage to overtake him. Scarcely had the two united than a sharp curve in the Sixes spun them into a clear straight-away. Ahead on the racing waters the coffin boat appeared, hurrying toward another eclipsing angle.

"He's sure headin' fer trouble in that contrapshun . . . the way he goes," the Cougar Woman called to the laboring Newlin.

"He don't seem t' have no steer on it . . ." the answer came back.

The other snorted. "Ain't surprised none. What's that?" She put out the flat of her hand. "Blamed ef it ain't beginnin' t' rain!"

Presently the drops came fast. The two rested their oars and cumber-somely donned their weather coats. Then they again settled themselves to vigorous and united pursuit. The gray flailing rain hung a film over the waters and the forested irregular shores.

They swept past occasional, indented clearings, past the landing that trailed up to the Berger clearing where Walt Berger's great barn loomed among the clustering cedars. Only now and again did they catch a glimpse of the lumbering coffin boat, each time farther ahead, always mid-stream and always outdistancing them.

"It's sure oncanny the way she don't git piled up on some rock," Else called out once, as the two trailing crafts surged through boiling rapids. "—sure oncanny!"

They were far down stream now, where the Sixes opens out into the wide bottoms of Shumway's ranch. Shumway's landing served as moorage for all boats coming down river. From the ranch itself led the trail that followed out to the beach sands and thus down coast to Port Orford, seven miles below. At times the river settlers would herd their hogs or cattle together at Shumway's and drive them combined on to market. It was for one of these drives that Miller now brought on his hogs.

But although the Sixes widens out toward its confluence with the Pacific it does not lessen its driving flood. The oarsman, centered in mid-current, tugs vigorously to draw his craft toward shore. It is labor enough for a light and governable boat. But for a log scow—

The three crafts were in full interchange view. Now the two could

see Jed Miller struggling prodigiously to swing his craft toward the left bank. He doubled far over as he strove to thrust his pole down for a purchasing shove. He lunged at each rock as he passed. He beat at the surface to alter his course. Still the current carried him. His efforts were meeting with small avail. He was a pigmy figure.

Presently he straightened erect and wildly gesticulated with the poling rod swung above his head. He lifted a hail to the shore, some five rods distant. His booming voice spread back to the two followers, hunched under the rain. Hearing it, they doubled to their oars.

"He ain't agoin' t' make it; he's agoin' t' be swept out!" the pale Newlin ejaculated gasping.

The Cougar Woman, her boat drawn alongside of Newlin's, labored with a set face. "The fool!" she gritted. She jerked off her fur cap and dashed it into the bottom of the boat. It rested there beside an axe. Her half-length hair blew unkempt about her sharp features.

On shore a man came running toward the landing; hailing the frantic Jed. His huge figure was swaying in the bobbing scow, the three hogs mingling their frightened squeals with his hoarse calls. As the man reached the landing he made for a tied-up craft, at the same time calling back toward the ranch buildings for additional help.

As the Sixes rushes past Shumway's the sea swells begin to reach in. Now one of these caught the unwieldy box-like scow, spinning it so sharply that the large muscular Jed was thrown sprawling among his clamorous beasts and all but overboard. He rose half-upright, clinging to the boat's rough sides. Presently a second roller swelled

in from the surf below. Behind him the current throbbed always astern. He was being borne out.

Another man had joined the first at the small wharf; the two were cutting loose in a small painter. A hound ran baying along the shore.

Up-stream the boats of Newlin and Else Tage watched and sped nearer. From time to time Newlin, tiring under the long strain, belabored himself for his inability to overtake his imperiled neighbor. "It was a coffin an' not a boat. It wasn't intended fer the livin'. Jed made a mistake," he muttered.

The other boat came alongside. "Yuh can't fool a coffin erbout who b'longs in't. He's sure nuff bein' took out," Else screeched.

The craft issuing from the landing, in place of following the vanity of pursuit, now put across to the opposite shore. Presently, as it beached, the two who manned it ran up through the timber. Somewhere up-coast a scant mile a long-boat was kept for use in just such emergencies. They would rouse the dune ranchers as they sped. To put out to sea offered the one hope for rescue—provided Jed Miller weathered the increasing, oncoming rollers.

Far ahead the coffin boat bobbed, a spinning blotch in the welter of gray waters. Over it presently the rain hung its gauze curtain.

The Pacific widened out until it was the world.

VI.

Garce Newlin stood, a spare anxious figure on the barnacled rocks where the Sixes river noses its turbid waters into the Pacific. A long line of breakers broke over the low sandy bar; breakers which swept on to cascade and

foam against the shore rocks. The sky, evil with stormy clouds, sagged toward the limitless sea that was reaching to take it.

Garce muttered to himself: "He didn't have no steer on the contrap-shun. He oughtta figgered the current was too much fer polin'. An' this rain . . . I was afeared."

He stroked his hand through his hair and commenced to pace nervously, stepping dangerously from point to point among the slippery marine growths of the rocks. Leaden-eyed, he gazed out at the sea-charge and the rain-drench, and up-coast toward Blacklock Point. It was certain the Japan current carried that way; would sweep whatever came seaward toward the north.

Also, up north a dozen or so men from the lower ranches were frantically putting out in a longboat to search the roaring waters for a man in a log scow. Newlin could just see their dim figures through the rain-slant and the sand haze plunging at the breakers to make a getaway. He himself had started with the crew but had given out on the arduous walk. He must wait here, a solitary sentry. Perhaps even now he would be the one to sight the log scow and its occupants: three fatted hogs and Jed Miller.

Garce shivered in the salt-chill breeze, the rain slapping into his face and coursing down his neck. Upshore the men had got the longboat launched. They were heading for the rocks of Blacklock Point.

From the margin of the buttress spruce and cedar forest at Newlin's

back the narrow figure of Else Tage, in muddy moccasins and a too-tight coonskin cap, clambered out on the rocks that extended to the grim watcher. In her hands she carried a woodsman's falling axe. She breathed hard, advancing cautiously upon the spare built man, a black figure against the dark sky. It wouldn't do to startle him. She kicked a loose stone and listened as it splashed into the sea.

Finally, nearly out of breath for one so resolute, she reached the man on the rock point. She stopped beside him, her lean figure a full half-foot taller. Her thin lips worked speechlessly.

Newlin spoke first: "I reckon we thought it was a celebration, sorta," he muttered huskily. "A sorta joke on the axe." He saw that the woman beside him was not gazing at him alone, nor at the grim water, but looked as well at the steel-bright, two-bladed implement clenched in her bony hand. Slowly she switched it over, now on one side, now the other uppermost. A gory splash of sun broke through the horizon clouds to gleam on the blade like blood.

"Yuh can't fool an axe," she said. Her face and her manner were calm, no trace of malevolence upon it, only an awareness, as though justice had been served and retribution made apparent.

Upcoast north the longboat was a bobbing dot in the graying-over dusk of the sea. A wild tern fluttered away up beach and a white gull steered into the sun-rift.

SAND HILLS

IRENE WELCH GRISSOM

When summer days are hot and still
 The lazy ripples run
 Across the crest and down the hill,
 To sparkle in the sun.

The winds of fall and winter lift
 The sand in blinding storms
 That build with huge, fantastic drift
 The slowly rising forms

Of new hills standing on a field
 Where spring should touch to green
 The waving wheat, whose golden yield
 Shall nevermore be seen.

I fear the hills of shifting sand—
 In twenty years, or more,
 Their drifts will blot my hard-won land
 And close my cabin door.

NORTHWEST FOLKLORE

OLD MAN COYOTE

GLENDOLIN DAMON WAGNER

HERE came a period in the evolution of the Absarokee Tribe, commonly known as "Crow Indians," when they began to ponder concerning the phenomena of the firmament with its sun and moon and stars, and the earth with its living creatures. And they arrived, finally, at a solution of the mystery quite satisfactory to them and strikingly similar to the solution of the Hindus, the Semitics, the Taos. Though they spoke in terms peculiar to their environment yet their religion, stripped of superstitions is, in its essence, the religion of all adolescent tribes.

When there began to stir within them a vague recognition of a higher power came, also, an urge to worship. They sensed the incompleteness of man and need to account for his origin. Probing back into the shadows of the past they found chaos, void of life, presided over by an all-powerful One who dwelt in the Blue and whom they called: "Old Man Coyote."

And this is the Crow's Book of Genesis as Chief Plenty Coups told it to me a few months before his death:

Many snows ago, before earth was, or animals, or man, there dwelt up in the Blue, in a great ball of fire which we call "the sun," the god of all the universe—Old Man Coyote. He was quite alone. Around him extended the vast Blue with neither moon nor stars. Beneath him an immense stretch of water.

And Old Man Coyote said: "There shall be an earth." And so he sent a duck down into the dark waters and the duck kicked up mud. And Old Man Coyote took this mud and made the earth. But, without life of any kind, the earth was very silent. So then Old Man Coyote took of the mud and made animals. He made the buffalo, the wild horses, the mountain sheep, the elk, the beaver. All things great and small did he make of the mud of the earth. And it became beautiful in his sight.

And yet Old Man Coyote was unhappy for those creatures of his down below grazing through tall grasses or swimming in cool waters did not know that his work was good. So Old Man Coyote took mud and fashioned another animal that did not walk

on four legs nor crawl on its belly nor fly through the air. This animal stood upright and was the most beautiful of all animals created. Old Man Coyote leaned him against a tree to dry and called him: "Man."

But neither the animals roaming the plains nor the man leaning against the tree knew aught of His marvels of creation. And Old Man Coyote, in the midst of all the beauties He had fashioned, was lonely still. And so He took a stick and made two holes in the head of the man and these holes became eyes. Then the man made of mud looked about at the wonders of earth and sky and fell on his knees in worship.

And Old Man Coyote said to the man: "You are a god, like unto me. I make you ruler of the universe. You shall be lord over the earth and its children."

And He was happy for loneliness had gone from Him and He returned to His home in the Blue.

Before many snows there were countless people upon the earth, both men and women. Of these women one was so beautiful that the Sun, looking down, desired her for his woman. So the Sun caused her to climb a tree after a squirrel. And, while she was in the tree, he sent warmth down upon it and made the rain to water its roots and it grew and grew until it reached the Blue. Then the Sun seized the woman and made her his woman.

She was not happy up there in the Blue. She longed to return to earth. Day after day she gazed down upon it and wept and her tears watered trees and grass, filled river beds, sent mountain streams rushing down to the plains. Then the Sun, in jealous anger, closed all the openings in the sky so she could no longer see the earth she loved. And the Sun and the woman had one child and it was the moon.

Now the moon loved his earthly mother. When she grieved he grieved also. And he pricked holes in the sky so she could look through down upon the earth, and these holes became the stars. But when she gazed through down upon the earth she wept the more for it was very beautiful there where all her people lived. So Moon took bow and arrows and shot and made comets and fall-

ing stars. On one of the comets his mother rode back to earth and she took her son with her. To this day one may see, on a rock in the Big Horn River, two deep indentations. That is where bride of the Sun with her child, the Moon, lighted upon the earth.

And she lived all the days of her life upon this rock. And seven children were born to her, seven little girls. One day, while they were playing out on the plains a bear pursued them. And they were frightened and ran to their mother on the rock. But the bear was big and strong and she could not save them. And she cried to the rock: "Oh, rock, save us, save us from the bear!"

Then the rock grew higher and higher, so high that, though the bear leaped and growled, he could not reach the children. The rock grew so high that it pushed the seven little girls up into the sky and they became the seven stars that we see, nights, up in the Blue.

Old Man Coyote was a kind god and His heart was troubled for He saw that His earthly children were not always happy. When the sun gave of its warmth and light, then trees and grass grew and animals waxed fat and the people laughed all day long. But when the sun went to sleep then snow covered the earth and people shivered with cold and cried with hunger.

Old Man Coyote said: "I have not done well. I have put my children upon the earth and left them to suffer. During the time the sun is asleep I will place little suns all over the earth." And He made fire.

Now the fire, at first, was guarded by a Bad One who would not give of it to the people. Then Old Man Coyote was very angry, and said to His people: "I will procure a brand of fire for you from the Bad One."

So He came down from the Blue and stationed animals all along the way, first an elk, then a bear, then a deer, a squirrel, a horse, lastly a frog. And He went to the cave of the Bad One and snatched a brand of fire from her and ran with it. He ran until He was exhausted, the Bad One close at His heels, and He handed the brand of fire to the elk. And the elk ran a long

way and handed the brand to the bear. And the bear ran, its feet pounding the grassy plain. And he ran until his heart burst within him. Then the horse took the brand but even the horse could not run as fast as the Bad One. So the horse passed the brand of fire on to the frog.

In those days the frog was big with a long tail and furry pelt. The frog ran only a few steps when the Bad One was upon him. So he gave a leap that landed him in the midst of the camp and dropped the brand at the feet of the cold and hungry people. But, as the frog leaped, the Bad One snatched him and seized his tail and furry pelt. So, ever since, the frog has been without a tail or fur and his eyes have bulged with fright. But the people love him for it was through him they received, from Old Man Coyote, the gift of fire.

Old Man Coyote looked down upon the earth He had created and found it beautiful with its majestic mountains, its silver lakes and streams, its broad, green valleys.

Soft sounds drifted up to Him—hum of bees, gentle trickling of falling waters, murmur of wind, joyous song of birds. Over all the earth in its tender, new beauty, spread the golden glow from the sun. And yet Old Man Coyote sighed and said: "That

which I would have perfect is not complete. What have I omitted?"

"Love," hummed the bees. "Love," whispered the wind. "Love," sang the birds.

And Old Man Coyote said: "Your hearts have spoken. I have created a world without love."

Then Old Man Coyote took from the Blue star-dust, from the sun a bit of its shine, and He added thereto music from throats of birds and fragrance from flowers. All things that were most beautiful He placed in the fire of happiness and stirred them and brewed them. Soon there arose a light so bright that those who gazed upon it became blinded.

So Old Man Coyote, seeing that His people groined and covered their eyes, added to the brew of love patience and sorrow and forgiveness and sacrifice and wetted it all with His tears.

Then, from the blinding light of happiness there arose a vapor, soft and mild, that spread over all the earth and entered into the hearts of His people. And Old Man Coyote said. "This is love." And His heart sang for He knew that His work was complete. And He returned to His home in the Blue, where, to this day, He watches over His children.

DREAM NOT TOO MUCH

MARY WALTER GREEN

Oh my daughter, dream not too much
When the sap is running free
And the leaf is shining on the bough—
Soon lonely stands the tree.

Starkly bare the brown limbs shiver
Stripped by a frosty touch;
Heartbreak is the heritage
Of those who dream too much.

Let them lie—your shattered dreams—
Among the fallen leaves—
Daughter, who dreams too much in April
In grey November grieves.

THE OPEN RANGE

Each issue will carry accounts of personal outdoor experiences. Only accounts of actual experiences are solicited.

HOMESTEAD DAYS IN MONTANA

PEARL PRICE ROBERTSON

YES, we lived on a homestead once, not so many years ago. Back in 1910 it was—twenty-three years ago in March—that we made our grand adventure by coming West to live on one. We were young then, Alec and I, and life was full of promise. We had been married four years, but somehow had never been able to reconcile ourselves to the bread-and-butter sort of existence led by the people in our native state—so smug and safe and comfortable, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow—you know, just being born, growing up, living and dying, all in the same cramped space. There must have been an adventurous streak in the makeup of both Alec and me. Anyway, a restlessness of spirit made us both long to get away, though neither of us ever quite admitted that longing.

At the time of our marriage, four years before, there was nothing we wanted so much as a home and a baby. We had no capital other than our love for each other—very much of that—youth, inexperience, unshaken faith in the future, a willingness to work. The home always came first in our plans and was as beautiful as any dream home could be, with wide lawns, gardens and orchards, great barns and fertile fields—a farm built up out of the raw land by the work of our own hands, a place to create beauty, to build projects, to change visions to reality; a haven and a refuge never to be completed throughout the years—we did not wish ever to come to the place where we could sit down with folded hands, saying: "It is finished; there is nothing more we can add."

But somehow things did not work out the way we had dreamed them; in three and a half years we had three pink-and-white, golden-haired babies, and our only home was a rented one—a little farm which we tended

faithfully, partly from sheer joy at digging in the soil and watching green things grow, and partly for means to provide baby shirts and little shoes, and other things so necessary to the proper bringing up of the cherubs. When we learned, somewhat by accident, of Uncle Sam's free homestead land in Montana it seemed such a happy solution to our problem of acquiring a home of our very own, that we decided to avail ourselves of the opportunity at once. But well-meaning friends and relatives had heard many lurid tales of Indian depredations, of outlawry, and of a rigorous Montana climate, and tried to dissuade us from so rash an undertaking. My own ideas of Montana had been gleaned from much that had been written of "the wild and woolly West," and, I must confess, I myself had thought of it as only a barren waste covered with cactus and sagebrush, inhabited by rattlesnakes and bloodthirsty savages. But the more we investigated Montana's homemaking possibilities, the more enthusiastic we became, so that in the end nothing could deter us from our purpose. Hand in hand with Alec, I would have gone to the ends of the earth seeking a home!

Our coming into touch with a job on a Montana ranch proved the deciding factor, for to us the opportunity seemed providential. Just a little apprehensive, perhaps, but prepared for the worst and highly resolved to meet unflinchingly whatever befell, we came in March, 1910—two "tenderfoot" strangers from the East and three babies—to the new little town of Hobson, Montana, which had sprung into being a year or two before when the railroad had been built through the Judith Basin. Any subconscious dread I might have had of lurking danger was quickly and completely dispelled when we were met at the station by our employer

and his four-year-old daughter. It was all so different from what I was expecting! Everything about the little town was clean and new; over it and the grassy benchlands stretching away to the foot of the mountains on every side, lay the warm spring sunshine, and round about us rose the mountains, dark and blue, like a great barricade shutting us in from the outside world. How near the mountains looked, to my wondering eyes, as if I could walk out and lay my hand upon them! And yet I was told they were fifteen to twenty miles away. We were so thrilled with our new environment, so charmed with the frank, openhearted friendliness of the Western people! The town and vicinity were in the throes of a real estate boom; wheat farming on the benchlands had been a huge success; everyone seemed optimistic, prosperous, happy. We found everywhere bustle and activity, a growing and prosperous community, peopled by a progressive citizenship. Yet there was so much which to us was new and unusual that we were like two eager children faring forth for adventure, delighted with everything we saw.

We went to work on the Philbrook Ranch, where the old deserted town of Philbrook stood on the banks of the Judith River. Straggling along either side of the one street, in varying stages of dilapidation, were the buildings of the old ghost town; the yards were choked with dry weeds and littered with rusty cans, discarded bedsprings and broken bits of furniture; in the corner, where the road turned sharply and became the street, stood the old hotel, containing fifteen rooms. This building served us for a dwelling. Across the spring run was the old livery stable, which became the ranch barn. Close on the bank of the crystal Judith stood the Clegg building, once a saloon and roadhouse. Across the river a community hall built of logs, where school was held, and opposite it a little frame church where "Brother Van," noted pioneer preacher, held services twice each month.

Very pleasant were the days we spent in this place; the owner of the ranch kept open house, buyers and traders came and went every day, and the personnel of the ranch hands changed every few weeks, so that we were constantly meeting new people.

Delightful to me was the innate politeness of the ranch hands; crude and uncultured though many of them were, their courtesy and deference to me, the only woman on the ranch, could not have been exceeded anywhere. Delightful, too, were the stories of life and adventure, sometimes highly embellished, I suspect, for my especial benefit, when the men "swapped lies" around the table, or when we sat around the fire in the big kitchen in the evenings.

In a few weeks Alec went in search of a homestead; I could scarcely wait for his return, so eager was I. Pride of possession and joy of ownership seized me when I learned that we had claim to three hundred twenty acres on Lonesome Prairie in northern Chouteau County—to us the first step in the accomplishment of our cherished dream. Long we sat by the fire that night of Alec's return, as he related to me the details of his trip and described the grassy prairie stretching westward twenty-five miles or more from Big Sandy to the Marias River; how three weeks after the land opening every foot of the land had been taken for twenty miles out; how the land locator had taken him out with a party of others who would be our neighbors: of the young Norwegian and his sweetheart but lately arrived from Norway who could not speak a word of English; of the genial old German who, when he found this broad stretch of fertile soil so much to his liking, and a whole section to be had for the taking, hurried back to the telegraph office and sent this telling message to two grownup sons and a daughter: "Come Henry; come Johnnie; come Mary; come quick!" Then Alec made the disconcerting disclosure that there were rattlesnakes on that prairie! Rattlesnakes? Dear me, wouldn't there have to be a catch in the thing somewhere? I shuddered. Oh, well,—there was a serpent in the Garden of Eden! Maybe we could just disregard the rattlesnakes, at least until we got there!

Joyfully we planned every detail of our little shack and figured the cost; eagerly I longed to begin work on my beautiful garden, and spent happy hours poring over nurserymen's catalogues selecting trees and shrubs and drawing plans. Because of our limited amount of cash there could be but

a few cherished plants at first, so I felt the selection of these required much thought. We planned to have a well put down on our farm at once to furnish water for our trees and plants. We had been accustomed all our lives to an abundance of water for every purpose and I had no conception of a locality where there was none.

In the spring of 1911 we prepared to move to our new home. Our household goods we shipped by local freight to Big Sandy, while the family made ready to drive overland in the wagon, taking the horses and chickens. As a protection against the weather Alec built up the back part of the wagonbox and roofed it over with a little peaked roof like the gables of a house. Then to make it waterproof I brought out a strip of white oilcloth taken from the kitchen table and this he nailed in place over the roof. As neither the boards nor the oilcloth were long enough to cover the space over the driver's seat in front, it had to be left open and exposed. We felt that the whole arrangement would answer our purpose well enough, so why should we care how it looked? Like two happy children we stowed blankets, cooking utensils and food supplies inside; two coops filled with chickens were wired to the back; a cart used as a trailer was piled with hay for the horses, and Cap, the young stallion, was tied to the rear of the trailer. As last minute touches, various pails, bags, and boxes were fastened on the outside because there was no room within.

On a cold gray morning, we started out from the Philbrook Ranch and followed the rocky winding trail past the old S. S. Hobson Ranch toward Utica. The children—Willie, aged four and but recently shorn of his long golden curls, carrying his little spool wagon; Julia, scarcely three, with a cherished rag doll, and Hazel a scant year and a half, were tucked cozily into a nest of blankets in the sheltered part of the wagonbox, and I rode on the seat beside Alec. We started out gayly enough, even in the threatening weather, but the wind was so raw and cold and the jolting wagon so uncomfortable that traveling gypsy-fashion soon lost its novelty.

We had nearly reached the little inland town of Utica when the wagon struck a rock heavily, a tire flew off, and the wheel

smashed! Alec groined despairingly as he climbed down to investigate. "Now, if that isn't hell," he said when he saw the extent of the damage. "Oh, Alec, we're in luck!" I cried, trying to pass over the incident lightly, "to have it happen here so close to Utica—maybe we can find a blacksmith there!" We did find one, but he was in no particular hurry to help us. We had to wait patiently. Nightfall found us still waiting, and we spent the night in our wagon, which stood in the middle of the road, exactly where the accident had occurred. But all night I lay wide-eyed listening to the chickens as they chattered discontentedly in their coops, the horses while they munched their hay and pawed restlessly, and occasionally a passing vehicle.

By noon the next day the wheel was ready. We started out once more, following the road northward toward Windham and Stanford. But repairing the broken wheel had taken eight dollars from our scanty savings and delayed us a whole day in our journey. The weather was still threatening and the wind so raw and cold that, although it was May, I suffered intensely, my hands numb and blue, my teeth chattering; when I could no longer endure the cold I crept miserably from my seat and snuggled among the blankets with the children. The mist had now thickened into a driving rain; Alec alone on the wagon-seat drove stoically through the falling rain, occasionally whistling forlornly, or humming a bit of song to break the dreary silence, while I, crouched down in the crowded space beneath the little roof, became deathly sick from the swaying and jolting of the wagon, and for relief would climb out, white and spent, upon the wagon-seat beside Alec until the rain and cold drove me once more to the sheltered wagon-box. All the pleasure I had anticipated from the journey faded away beneath the strain of physical weakness and discomfort. When night overtook us in the vicinity of Stanford, it was a forlorn little party of travelers who drew the wagon up beside the walls of an unfinished building which sheltered us from the wind. There we spent the night. All through it the rain pattered down. As I lay cramped and miserable, listening to the rain-drops above us, I thanked our lucky fate

for the table oilcloth nailed over our little roof—we had come so near to starting out without a shelter of any kind!

Next morning the rain had ceased and by noon the sky had cleared; our spirits rose accordingly. I felt cheerful, even gay, as I rode again on the seat with Alec and we talked happily together. Both he and I had been reared in the level plains country of the Mississippi Valley and were all unprepared for the rough character of some of the country through which we were to travel. Going northward from Stanford, I noticed during the afternoon a long, low line of what appeared to be the tops of chalky white bluffs coming into view in front of us. Wondering, I asked, "What can that be, Alec?"

Puzzled, he answered, "I, too, am wondering what it can be. Whatever it is, we will have to drive either through it or over it; it is quite evident we cannot drive around it."

"See that moving covered wagon?" I asked, pointing eastward, "I have been watching it for some time. It is steadily drawing nearer to the road which we are following, and I believe will soon come into this trail."

So it proved; late in the afternoon the two wagons came together at the point where the trails joined on the brink of the badlands which flank the Arrow River. Never had I seen a natural formation resembling the badlands, so that, coming upon this abruptly and unsuspectingly, I was mutely astonished at the spectacle. Looking down into this great gash in the earth's surface, worn by the erosion of centuries, beyond the weird, fantastic forms of butte, bluff and canyon, I could see the river far below shining through the cottonwoods. It seemed to me like a picture from an unknown world.

The stranger who drove the other wagon was courteous and friendly, as Alec inquired about the route through the badlands. "Have you a roughlock?" asked the stranger; but Alec, inexperienced, plainsbred man that he was, had not even an ordinary brake on his wagon. The stranger told him that between us and the river below was a two-mile stretch of steep and extremely dangerous road, built and used by freighters, so narrow in places that occasionally a

wagon went over the brink. "But," he said to Alec's look of dismay, "we will take my wagon down first and then bring the chains back for yours."

So I, with the babies, waited anxiously at the top while they took the first wagon down. I prayed silently and with bated breath as they took the second wagon containing the children and me over that dangerous trail; but happily for us all, we landed at the bottom without mishap. It was a merry little party which camped that night under the cottonwoods at the water's edge. The bright full moon came up over the bluffs and smiled down at us as we ate our supper from the top of a bale of hay, which, covered with a laundered flour-sack, served for a table. The obliging stranger shared our supper and our camp that night, but in the morning he left us and we never saw him again. Always I feel it was the compassionate intervention of an all-wise Providence which delayed us at Utica and so timed our journey as to be coincident with that of the stranger who helped us, all unprepared as we were, over this dangerous bit of the trail.

Our way now lay along the valley, through sagebrush and prairie-dog towns, past the low rambling house of the Milner Ranch, overhung by the shadow of Square Butte and supplied with water from the mountain-side above; then out upon the bench again we followed the trail past the spot where the town of Geraldine now stands. A railroad has since been built through this section and towns have sprung up, but at the time of our journey there were on the site which is now Geraldine only a lone ranch house and sheep corrals known to us as the Collins-Brady Ranch. This and the winding trail across the prairie were the only signs of human habitation we saw in all that day's travel—just sky and earth, the ribbon of road and our solitary wagon—until in the evening we reached a dilapidated old building, once a pretentious structure, known locally as the Halfway House. Here we camped. The following morning the trail led us over Frenchman's Ridge, down through the rocky Shonkin canyon and across the Missouri River bridge into Fort Benton.

It was a Sunday morning and the rain

had been steadily falling since daybreak. Because of the rain I rode in the shelter of the wagon-box. I was very weak and ill, and painfully aware of my own and the children's untidiness. Alec parked the wagon near the ruins of the historic fort and went up town to make inquiries about the road. I crept out upon the wagon-seat and sat there miserably in the falling rain. The cool drops on my face heartened and revived me, but I shivered with the dampness and chill. Willie, my firstborn, came and perched on the seat beside me, and tried in his babyish way to cheer me. We must have presented a sorry appearance, but I was too sick to care. A man came out of a house across the way, walked past us twice, looking at us curiously, and then came over to the wagon. Imagine my surprise when a hearty voice said, "Hand down that little fellow and come on over to the house; we have a fire there and a hot dinner. Come on over and have Sunday dinner with us!"

"Oh, no," I protested, "thanks a lot, but we've been traveling all morning through the rain and mud, and really we are too dirty to go into anyone's house!"

"Oh, what's a little mud? Come right on!" he insisted, and carried the children to the house, so that I could do little else but follow. When Alec returned to the wagon, he was surprised to find us gone, but he, too, was invited to the house.

"Do I know you?" Alec asked, astonished.

"I don't know if you do or not," was the answer, "but it doesn't make any difference. Come on over and have dinner!"

How much we appreciated the warmth and cheer of that hospitable home, none but a chilled and weary traveler can ever know. Every detail of that dinner will remain in my memory while life shall last.

As we left Fort Benton we followed the valley of the Teton until we reached the point where the Marias empties into the Missouri. Here we camped and again the rain fell in a drenching downpour. All night long and a part of the next day it beat upon us. The next morning our team mired down in the slippery mud of the canyon, and we had to pay a man two dollars from our fast diminishing supply of cash to bring his team and pull our wagon out. When we reached

Big Sandy we found it the scene of much activity as busy settlers came and went, hauling out lumber for new little shacks, posts and wire for fences, and machinery to break the sod.

Facing westward from Big Sandy we drove twenty miles to the quarter section which was to be our home on the wide wind-swept prairie; and just before sundown we stopped on the spot where our shack was to be. Westward lay the Goosebill, long and low; northward the Sweetgrass hills on the Canadian border, crowned with snow; behind us the Bearpaws made a jagged line against the sky; far to the south in the blue distance loomed the Highwoods. The sun shone on the grass sparkling with raindrops; the wild sweetpeas nodded their yellow heads in friendly greeting. As I looked across the rolling expanse of prairie, fired with the beauty of a Montana sunset, I sent a little prayer of thanksgiving up from my heart for this, our very first home! Only a rec-tangle of prairie sod, raw and untouched by the hand of man, but to us it was a kingdom.

I loved the prairie, even while I feared it. God's country, the old timers called it. There is something about it which *gets* a man—or a woman. I feared its relentless-ness, its silence, and its sameness, even as I loved the tawny spread of its sundrenched ridges, its shimmering waves of desert air, the terrific sweep of the untrammelled wind, burning stars in a midnight sky. Still in my dreams I can feel the force of that wind, and hear its mournful wail around my shack in the lonely hours of the night! How many times I watched the stars at night, fires of Heaven shining through, as I waited listening for the rumble of Alec's wagon.

The rollicking wind promptly bowled our tent over, that first night at our new home, so again we slept in our wagon. The only water we had for any purpose was contained in a gallon jug, and we did not know how soon nor where we could get more. Consequently, we drank sparingly and in little sips, and bathed our hands and faces in the dewy grass of the morning. We never could keep the tent up—but what matter?—our neighbor lent us the use of a little shack across the way until our own shack was built. There we camped the first few weeks.

We had no stove nor firewood that first day—no, I had not learned to burn cow-chips yet—that was an innovation which came later. Alec went back to town to bring out our first load of lumber, and the children and I put on our wraps and, to keep out the chill, huddled beneath our blankets in the shack. It took most of the day and well into the night to make the trip into town and return with a load, so in the evening I hung up a lighted lantern to guide Alec on his return to the shack. At first we set the kitchen range up out-of-doors, but rain and disagreeable weather made this impractical; then we moved it within, and since there was no hole in the roof, stuck the pipe out through the little hole in the side which served for a window. The stove and the folding-bed filled almost the entire space. There was no room for table or chairs, so mostly when mealtime came we stood and ate from the plates which we held in our hands. The walls were of unmatched lumber which let in the wind and rain, but at least over us there was a roof. We were real Westerners now, and could not shrink from anything which was to be our portion.

The greatest hardship of all was the scarcity of water. The first settlers had dug wells, which eighty to ninety feet down were still dry as dust. At first we were filled with dismay to find no water anywhere, sometimes we had none even to drink until Alec bought a barrel which he filled with water each day when in town and brought home on top of his load of lumber. We had to stint ourselves extremely for water for bathing, and as for our clothing I washed it a few pieces at a time in the wash-basin, because there was no water to fill the tub! We located some water-holes and coulees where occasionally we could get water for our horses, but often we had to go many miles for it. My throat constricted with pain when I thought of the well we had planned with which I meant to irrigate my lovely dream garden. It now seemed very remote indeed! Later a shallow well was dug in the coulee a mile away which yielded us a small amount of water each day.

Once that spring when we went to the

coulee for water the cattlemen were holding their last big roundup on that prairie since the homesteaders had taken their range; they had established camp by the water-hole and had just butchered a young steer. Here was a bit of the old West about which I had read—the branding iron on the smoldering fire, the rope corral, the chuck-wagon, the riders with wide sombreros, hairy “chaps” and jingling spurs! While we were filling our water-barrel one of the cowboys came over, and with a grand sweep of his broad hat, smilingly proffered us a piece of the freshly butchered beef. Could he have known how much we appreciated his gift, or by any chance have guessed how lean was the larder in the little shack at home?

We worked happily at our building during every minute of our spare time: I held the boards while Alec sawed and nailed them, and in a few weeks, the new shack, fourteen feet by twenty feet, with two windows and a door, was ready to move into. Joyfully I worked with rugs, curtains and other things dear to a woman's heart, making it pretty and livable.

Alec plowed a small plot for a garden and I attempted the disheartening task of planting it—disheartening because amid the hard dry chunks of sod I could find no loose soil for covering the seeds. Patiently I took up the sods one by one, and with my hands pounded and shook soil from the matted grass roots and carefully patted it over my seeds. But disillusionment sat heavy upon me; as I worked the tears fell, and truly I “watered my furrows with tears.” No more rains came, the grass shriveled and dried up, and shimmering heat-waves danced across the landscape. The only seeds in my garden which found moisture enough to grow were the beans, and then as soon as the seed-leaves appeared above the ground the chickens promptly snapped them off. My first garden on the homestead became only a sad memory.

How much I feared the rattlesnakes, not on my own account alone, but for the sake of my little children! I warned them repeatedly as they played about the dooryard to look out for “ugly creeping things” and to beware of buzzing noises. But we never saw any—not one! One day as Alec and I

walked about our so-called garden we noticed a great black beetle shambling along among the clods and pointed it out to our little son. Imagine how I felt when the little fellow shrank back, his face pale and eyes round with fear as he gasped out. "A rattlesnake!"

Life on the homestead was becoming a serious problem to us now; our money was all gone and food supplies almost exhausted. There was still a little flour, and a bit of lard, I remember. There was no yeast or other leavening; for bread I mixed the flour with water and a little lard, and baked it in small cakes. There was rice, but no sugar, so I put in a few raisins for sweetening. There was absolutely nothing else, so far as I can now recall. Alec was faced with the necessity of leaving his family on the homestead while he went in search of work. I tried to be very brave, but my heart sank at the thought of facing life in that lonely place without Alec. Many of our neighbors, too, went away looking for work, so that I was left very much alone except when some distant settler passed by, sometimes bringing my mail and supplies. At times for days I saw no one; and then the terrifying loneliness and silence of the great prairie appalled me, and I sobbed aloud to shut out the eerie sound of the coyote's wail, or the dreary sighing of the wind beneath the eaves of my shack. I went to the coulee a mile away each day for water, and occasionally the children and I made the trip afoot to the store and postoffice; but as these trips always left us all very much exhausted, we did not attempt them often. Alec wrote every week, sometimes oftener, and his letters were always a delight—long, and filled with details of his work and associations. After one of his letters came I could forget my loneliness and sing at my work for hours.

I busied my mind and my hands with homely little tasks, making over garments for the children's wear and preparing a layette for the new baby soon to come. I sighed over the layette, for mostly it was composed of clothes which my other babies had worn, and I found myself longing intensely for at least *one* new little garment for the precious darling. I had a large-sized sugar sack which had been carelessly tossed

into Alec's wagon one day at the store; this I carefully ripped open, washed, bleached in the sun, and pressed. I drew threads painstakingly and made a drawnwork yoke of exquisite pattern, hemstitched ruffles for the neck and sleeves, and with a deep hem at the bottom it became a dainty little dress which with a sense of deepest satisfaction I laid away in readiness for my baby's coming.

Summer waned, and the frosty mornings and the calm sunshiny days of autumn came on. Alec was to come for us soon, as he was making plans to take us to the Judith Basin where he worked, so that I might have the care of a doctor and a nurse in my hour of need. I wrote to Alec setting the date for his coming in early October, since I expected my baby in November, giving myself, or so I thought, ample time to make the trip and get rested afterward. Twenty-four hours after mailing that letter I was startled by premonitory pains of an alarming nature, and as they constantly recurred at decreasing intervals I became more and more uneasy . . . Could I have been mistaken in the time? . . . Could this be approaching childbirth? . . . Maybe if I rested quietly for awhile . . . maybe, oh! maybe—no, there was no longer any doubt—my baby would arrive before the letter could reach Alec, before competent help could ever reach me! . . . Pains oftener now, and more severe! . . . Heaven help me now, I must think what to do!

Calmly I went about preparations; trying hard to keep a firm grip upon myself, trying hard not to become panicky. I *must* be brave; I must keep my head. Babies had been born before like this . . . and everything was all right—oh, if I were only sure what to do! If I only had someone—anyone, to look to for help! I watched for a little boy who occasionally rode past my shack in search of his cows which roamed the prairie, and luckily tonight he came within calling distance. "Johnnie, take this note to your mother!" "What is it, a party?" the boy asked eagerly, as he took the note. "I want your mother—I need her help! Oh, please hurry!" I gasped. The gray pony bounded forward and disappeared into the gathering dusk. As darkness came on I put the chil-

dren to bed and waited tensely for the help which *must* not fail me! Prayerfully I waited—and walked the floor listening, listening—almost in despair as my need grew greater. Such a wave of relief surged over me as I heard scurrying footsteps in the darkness! My sister-in-law arrived, frightened and tearful, and Mrs. Warren, capable, motherly, master of the situation at once. An hour later my wee new daughter was born!

Call it premonition or otherwise, Alec decided to surprise me by coming home much sooner than I was expecting him, and at the same hour that I was waiting for help to come in my desperate need, he was speeding toward home as fast as a train could take him. The train pulled into Big Sandy a few minutes after midnight and Alec stepped out into the darkness without a moment's pause and set afoot out to walk the twenty miles to the shack on the great brown prairie, which held his loved ones. He arrived home soon after daybreak, to find me in bed, flushed with happiness, a new-born daughter by my side.

The children, wakened from their sleep by Alec's arrival, climbed upon him as he sat on the edge of my bed and began opening the parcels he had brought to them; suddenly they discovered a tiny sister nestled in mother's arms, whereupon they fell upon Alec with fervent hugs and kisses, calling him "the dearest daddy in the world" for bringing them, besides new shoes and stockings, a brand new baby sister!

The settlers of our prairie were of many kinds and classes and had hailed from many different states, both east and west, but we were all one great brotherhood. If a man had a homestead alongside the others, he was accepted by all the others without question. We helped one another; what one had, he shared with the next. If one man owned a team, his neighbor some harness, and a third one a plow, they managed a plowed strip for each of the three. Many were the makeshifts and privations which made us all kindred souls. One old man bought a boy's farm wagon which he used to take his supplies home, another brought his things from town in a wheel-barrow, while I, truth to tell, took my baby carriage

and trundled it across the prairie to bring home my sack of flour and other groceries.

Always we were handicapped by the scarcity of water. Alec spent many long hours hauling water for our livestock and for our domestic uses. We lived on the homestead during the spring and summer months; there was never money enough for us to spend a whole year there. The winters we spent in the Judith Basin in various ways and places at whatever work came to hand, but spring always found us returning like homing pigeons to the little shack on the prairie, each year putting in more crops and adding to the improvements on the farm. Many times we made the trip across country in our wagon, but later it had a canvas cover in regulation "prairie schooner" style, and for bad weather a stove. Once we started out, after a week of balmy weather in March, only to be overtaken by a howling blizzard. For two days we drifted with the wind and flying snow, so that the stove and fuel we had in the wagon saved us from probable freezing.

Two more boys were born to us, and then in rapid succession two more daughters. The family prospered, so that at last we could spend all our time on the homestead. We owned a car and the fourteen-by-twenty shack became a five-room cottage—but never was it the home of our youthful dreams. My lovely garden, so soul-satisfying and enchanting, was never aught but a beautiful dream—the trees we planted pined away and died for lack of water, while my flowers bent their frail heads and the brazen sun turned them into nothingness. The war had come, bringing with it high prices for the farmer's grain, and copious rainfall had blest the settlers' efforts with bounteous harvests. The four elevators of the prairie town were kept filled to overflowing with golden grain, and every day the golden flood poured in, hundreds of wagons waiting for freight cars, so that the farmers might take turns unloading their precious cargoes. With wheat at \$1.87 a bushel and granaries and bins filled to bursting, the settlers bought more land and high-priced machinery to grow more and bigger crops "to help win the war." But the bad years came when we staked our *all* on the caprice of the weather

and a wheat crop which might never be harvested. As drouth, weeds, cutworms, and hail-storms took their toll from the grain fields, the eager illuminating light of hope died out of the settlers' faces and gave place to a look of morbid apathy and despair. We looked across the broad acres of stunted, shriveled crops, dotted with Russian thistles, and the mortgages mounted higher and the bankers clamored for their interest.

Then came a year when no rains fell and no crops grew, and the bewildered settlers faced a winter with no money, no food, no clothing for their families, no feed of any kind for their livestock, no work. Dumb with despair, the men set about finding some means of providing for their families; most of them went away to work while the women and little children stayed on in the homes, carrying on as best they might. Alec found a job on a ranch near Billings. When he went away I was left on the homestead once more without him, but this time with nine children instead three, the youngest a baby three weeks old.

Alec sent every dollar of his wages home as fast as it was earned, yet with me the winter was one long struggle with circumstances to keep my family warmed and fed and to save our horses from starvation. Upon the horses depended our ability to put in one more crop. With the help of my twelve-year-old boy I braved the storms, waded snowdrifts to keep the horses fed, and stood upon an icy platform in below-zero weather drawing water while the horses crowded and pushed about the watering-trough. Topsy, the black mare, had a young colt running with her and we decided it was best to wean the colt, so we shut him in the barn, leaving the mare outside. But the faithful mother refused to desert her offspring and took up her post just outside the barn door, calling to him in anxious whinnies or soft nickers of love. All night long she kept the vigil; refusing to seek shelter for herself, she stood where the keen blasts of an icy wind struck with fullest force. When morning came Willie and I found her crumpled form in the snow by the barn door, frozen dead! Mother and son, we wept together over the loss of a faithful friend, while the wind ruffled the

icy mane and sent little eddies of drifting snow across the frozen body. Two other horses we lost that winter and each time I felt the loss keenly, as that of a valued friend; but when spring came we still had nine left of our twelve—gaunt, shaggy creatures, covered with vermin.

The feed for my pigs gave out. When a week had gone by I thought desperately of trying to butcher the sorry little creatures. I wept over their plight, but my woman's nature quailed at the thought of undertaking the butchering alone with no help but Willie's. At last my brother-in-law and two neighbor lads came to help, but the day we set for the butchering was bitter cold with freezing blasts of snow-laden wind sweeping out of the north. Scalding and scraping the pigs was a painful task as the water cooled and changed to ice rapidly; but at last the eight of them were cleaned and scraped after a fashion and left hanging in the shed while we ate our dinner. We ate hurriedly, so as to return to our task before freezing interfered with cutting the meat into pieces for curing. But when one of the lads hurried out ahead to examine the pigs he called back, "They're frozer'n hell right now!" Stiffly swinging from the rafters, they hung like graven images carved of stone; no knife could penetrate the frozen forms. To save fuel we moved the kitchen range into the large living room—here, too, had been placed our beds—and here we carried the frozen pigs and placed them in formidable array across the dining-table; they stood at various rakish angles, each firmly upon his feet, ears outspread and tails extending stiffly straight out behind, to be left until they thawed out. I sat up late that night keeping a brisk fire burning and writing a letter to Alec. It was so cold the timbers of the house popped and the frost crept higher and ever higher up the door. The hands of the clock pointed almost to midnight. Suddenly I was startled by footsteps in the frozen snow and my name called in a familiar voice. "Open the door quick! We've a girl out here who's nearly frozen!" Hastily I opened the door and recognized Dan, a friend of the family, and another man supporting between them a slender young girl. We carried her inside, where I removed her

thin shoes and rubbed her aching hands and feet. When she was warmed and resting comfortably Dan turned about, glanced at my sleeping children in the cots, and then at the frozen pigs upon the table. "My God!" he said.

The girl—a homesick child—had been attending school in Big Sandy, and longing to spend the Thanksgiving vacation with home folks, had attempted a twenty-five mile ride atop a load of coal, when the thermometer stood at thirty degrees below zero. I took her into bed with me for the rest of the night and the men went to a neighbor's.

Thanksgiving morning dawned clear and cold; the morning sun shone across a white and frozen world lying crisp and still in the crinkling frosty air. The Russian thistles had caught the drifts and each was a hummock of glittering snow—no sign of life in the white expanse except the smoke which curled lazily upward from the housetops dotting the prairie. My little guest of the night before continued her journey that day and reached home in time to partake of Thanksgiving dinner with home folks.

One of my greatest problems was bringing supplies from town, especially hay and fuel. Never having money enough at a time to buy any great quantity, I lived in abject terror of exhausting my supply before I could get more. Alec wrote: "If your fuel gives out, burn the fence posts, tear boards from the barn and burn them, burn *anything* about the place—don't take any chances of freezing!" Sometimes when food supplies ran low I was driven to parcelling out our meals in bits, and at times the pinched, ill-nourished look on the faces of my children made me sick with apprehension. Once in the coldest weather it was imperative that we get supplies from town. I hesitated to send my boy, small and frail as he was, but there seemed no other way. Pridefully, manfully, he set out with the team and sled, in company with his uncle, to bring hay, coal, potatoes, flour and sugar—there was little else we could afford to buy. The roads were piled with frozen drifts so that bringing out a loaded sled was a slow and tedious matter, and the boy, inadequately clothed and with ragged overshoes many sizes too large, walked stumblingly through the snowdrifts

all the long way from town behind the slow-moving sled. It was hours after dark before I heard the jingling of the harness and the creaking runners of the returning sleds. The boy reached home shaking with cold and reeling with exhaustion. As I worked over the wornout child, rubbing with snow his numbed hands and frostbitten feet, my mother's heart swelled with fierce, hot rebellion over the fate which imposed such hardship upon so young a child; I made a swift, determined resolve not to let my children be crushed by the sordidness of circumstances, to secure for them their just measure of the beauty and brightness of life, and to make up to them by every means at my command for the privations they now endured.

December brought a chinook and the snow disappeared with the warm southwest wind like ice beneath a July sun. Water filled the puddles, overflowed the ponds, and rushed in torrents down the coulees. No longer need I worry about hauling water, for the rest of that season at least!

Christmas day the neighbors gathered at my home for a community Christmas dinner. None had much, but all brought something, and assembled, it seemed an abundance. Jollity, friendship and good-will radiated from the fun-loving crowd, the day being shadowed for me only by the lack of Alec's presence. It was but one of many good times the community shared together.

Alec returned with the coming of spring and together we planned the planting of one more crop. During the long winter months another plan had been slowly forming in my mind, a plan to which I gained Alec's reluctant consent. Leaving my nine-months-old baby in the care of a neighbor, I washed and pressed my one dress, mended the only shoes I possessed, and in a shabby black coat and khaki hat I went to town to write the examinations for a Montana teacher's certificate. Timidly at first, then glowingly as I warmed to my subjects, I wrote and wrote; and then feverishly awaited the returns from Helena. When I was once more the happy possessor of a teacher's certificate I went to my local board of trustees and asked for a position, and they were too surprised to say "no." Three years I taught

my own and my neighbors' children and some of the happiest hours of my life were spent in that tiny prairie schoolhouse where zealously I tried, out of my own knowledge and experience, to bring beauty and joy into the lives of the thirty-three children whose only experiences had been those of the drab life on the bleak prairie. All the love I put into my work there has been returned to me a thousand fold. The money I earned helped to feed and clothe my family and started my boy to high school.

Courageously but hopelessly the settlers struggled on, trying vainly with borrowed money to battle the elements, to tame the desert, and to carve home and fortune out of the raw land. Then came the grasshoppers, newly hatched, swarming out of the unplowed fields and covering the growing crops with a gray, slimy, creeping cloud which hour by hour steadily advanced, wiping out the greenness of the land, leaving only dry, bare clods in the fields. Despair over the ravaged crops filled the farmer's hearts.

On the billowing, russet prairie stands an empty farmhouse, its windows gone and doors sagging; beneath its eaves the wind sighs mournfully, the desert sand drifts around its doorstep, and the Russian thistle tumbles past. Desolate, silent it stands—grim witness to the frustration of a man's

hopes and a woman's dreams . . . We have no regrets; life is fuller and sweeter through lessons learned in privation, and around our homestead days some of life's fondest memories still cling. We are of Montana, now and always; boosters still—and in a fair valley of western Montana where the melting snows of the Mission Range trickle out in clear streams across the thirsty land, our dreams of the long ago are slowly taking on life. The grass grows green about my doorstep, the vines clamber about my porch, the flowers bloom, the birds sing, and Alec's much-loved Brown Swiss cattle graze in lush fields. The little children who shared the privations of homestead life—three sons and seven daughters—are growing into a splendid family, a pride and a blessing every one. In the past six years five of them have graduated from the local high school, one is a member of the senior class, and two are freshmen; one is a business college graduate and two have graduated from a state normal school. Tonight, as I write, the mellow glow of our electric lights shines over our happy home circle, the rooms vibrant from the tinkle of a piano, the melodious wail of a violin, and the lilting of happy youthful voices. I feel that creating a home and rearing a family in Montana has been a grand success, and my cup seems filled to overflowing with the sweetness and joy of living.

TRAILS

STEVE HOGAN

The hills are gaunt
As starved cattle after a blizzard;
And dark
As sagebrush plains powdered with dusk.
Dim, dun scars,
Trails scuffed in the rock
By the boots of prospectors and horses' hoofs,
Are as half-forgotten dreams.
Above the timber line
The limestone peaks
Are ghosts of dreams
Of dreamers long since dead.
Perhaps their souls passed over the hazy trails
Back-tracking.

HISTORICAL SECTION

Each issue will carry some authentic account, diary or journal or reminiscence, preferably of early days in this region of the country.

WAR DEPARTMENT RECORDS

EDITED BY LLOYD LEHRBAS

I. "Arrived: All Well"

*The Journal of Captain Medorem Crawford,
U. S. Army, Assistant Quartermaster,
Overland Wagon Train, 1862*

Note: This is a plain, unvarnished story of the long journey by wagon-train from Omaha, Nebraska, then the frontier post of the wilderness, across the sagebrush plains and prairies of Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon to Portland as told in Captain Crawford's own simple, matter-of-fact language. It gives a graphic picture of how pioneers settled the great West despite Indians, the hardships of the more than four months' trek over desert and mountains, and their unpreparedness. This expedition consisted of 125 wagons with 300 pioneers and made the trip from June 16 to October 30, 1862.

SIR: The duty of conducting an escort for the protection of emigrants to the Oregon country having been assigned me by the Secretary of War, and having performed that service, arriving all well, I deem it my duty, as it is certainly my pleasure, to report to you the principal incidents of the trip.

After organizing my company, procuring my transportation and provisions, etc., I left Omaha, Nebr. Ter., on the 16th of June, 1862. My company consisted of fifty mounted men, armed with rifles and revolvers, who were instructed in the duties of sentinels and drilled in the simpler evolutions of cavalry tactics. As you know, because of the Rebellion, I had small choice of men.

Our route lay on the north side of and immediately along the River Platte, up the Sweetwater, over the Lander road to near Fort Hall in Idaho Territory, and thence to the south side of the Snake River to Fort Walla Walla, Washington, Territory.

The movement westward was very large. Emigrants to Oregon, Washington Territory, Great Salt Lake in the country of the Mormons, California, and Denver were on this road. Some had started in April, and were

consequently several hundred miles in advance of the rear portion of the emigration. Feeling it to be my duty to protect the rear (which is always the weakest), I did not hasten on the first part of the trip, but urged upon the emigrants with whom I fell in as I proceeded, the necessity of husbanding the strength of their teams so as to be able to perform the journey over the barren stretches of the Great Snake River Desert, the necessity for which my last year's experience had taught me.

I soon found that a large proportion of the emigrants had started for the Salmon River mines under the very erroneous impression as to the locality of the mines. A guide of the route had been published and extensively circulated on the frontier, representing those mines as being within 180 miles of Fort Hall, but not giving the locality of the road. They did say: Good grass and plenty of water all the way.

Under this false impression many emigrants had overloaded their wagons and taxed their horses beyond their strength, and so positive were they that they could reach the mines without making the hard and difficult journey down the Snake River, that many of them disregarded my counsel, which was to dispense with comparatively useless articles with which they were encumbered.

The result was that as soon as we left the valley of the Platte and encountered the heavy sand and hills their teams and wagons began to fail and break down. They then found it necessary to do what I had earnestly advised long before—dispose of heavy and useless articles—but unfortunately, it was too late to save many of the horses. They dropped, too weak to struggle on, were cut

from the harness and killed, and left to bleach their bones on the sage plains.

From the sand hills to Powder River article after article of furniture was tossed out on the prairie, and wagon after wagon had to be left behind as the horses died, and scarcely a camping place was left without some evidence of property abandoned.

The large number of teams and wagons ahead of us had cut up the road to such an extent that the dust was very deep and the alkaline properties in the clouds of it which swept up from the hoofs of the horses was fatal to the cattle the emigrants were driving to their new homes. There were over forty head of dead cattle between the Owyhee and Malheur rivers, a distance of sixteen miles, and we found the proportion, as shown by bleaching bones, nearly as great all along the Snake River.

The first evidence we saw of Indian depredations was a grave at the crossing of the New Fork of Green River. From the inscription placed upon it we learned that Patrick Moran, of Missouri, was killed by Indians on the 18th of July, and two men were wounded. We passed this spot the 11th of August, about three weeks after, at which time no Indians were to be seen.

The next grave was on LaBarge Creek, in the Bear River Mountains, on the head-board of which was the following:

"Opened by Kavanaugh's train on the 27th of July, 1862. The body of a man found too badly decayed for removal. One shot in the temple and an arrow wound. Supposed to have been killed by Indians."

On the 25th day of August we passed the graves of several persons. One was that of an unknown man found by Captain Glenn's party on August 13. He had been shot in the back of the head with buckshot.

Three miles farther there were five graves, side by side, of persons supposed to have been killed by Indians. On the little pine-boards that had been placed over their heads were their names: Rufus C. Mitchell, N. Howie, James Steel, David Whitmer, and Frank Sessions. This was in the vicinity of Fort Hall, Idaho Territory, and happened on the 9th of August, we passing on the 25th. We learned from the ferryman on the Snake River that these five men were

slain by Indians and that while they were being massacred by the war-whooping savages twenty armed men from the same wagon-train stood upon a hill nearby and made no attempt to rescue their comrades.

There are strong reasons for believing that white men bore a part in this massacre.

Between Fort Hall and the Raft River we found the graves of four men supposed to have been killed by Indians on the 9th of August. After crossing Raft River we found the grave of a Miss Adams who was shot on the 9th and died on the 12th. We passed here on the 31st of August, twenty-two days after the attack. At about the same time a Mr. Phillips left his wagon-train to go fishing, alone and unarmed, and was taken by Indians and is supposed to have been killed. This happened near Goose Creek.

It will be seen that the number killed, of whom we have positive information, is about fifteen. No emigrants have at any time been troubled by Indians while in the vicinity of my escort, but from the disposition shown by the savages toward the advance parties it is easy to see that the later and weaker parties would have been easily cut off had it not been for the protection afforded them by the Government.

Near Old Fort Hall, which was a Hudson Bay trading post, a ferry has been established across the Snake River, and many emigrants, fired by the news of gold discoveries, had crossed to search for the mines. Some went to Fort Lemhi, others to the Deer Lodge Prairie, while still others went along the north side of the Snake and re-crossed that stream at Boise.

From what was told me I am satisfied that many were induced to cross at Fort Hall by the representations of these ferry-men, and their information turned out to be unreliable. About twenty wagons which had crossed and met a returning party, were induced to recross and join those who were already under my escort.

At this point I had 125 wagons of emigrants under my charge, and I found that many of their teams were so weak that they could not travel over ten miles a day, while others were able to proceed faster. In order to give protection to all I divided my com-

pany, placing the advance party in charge of my principal assistant, Mr. LeRoy Crawford, while I remained with the rear and weaker party.

On the 8th of September we were greeted by the welcome sight of the command of Col. Reuben F. Maury of First Oregon Cavalry Volunteers, encamped on the river near the falls of the Snake, with the American flag flying from their tents. Their headquarters are at Fort Walla Walla, Washington Territory, five hundred miles hence, and they marched to the Falls through the Bruneau River and Owyhee River country. Very few Indians were seen on their march and they had no communication with any, although reports were current on the Owyhee that eight or nine emigrants had been scalped by the savages and gold to the amount of \$8,000 stolen.

At the Falls it was reported that a council of war was being held somewhere in the vicinity to decide whether or not the Snakes or Bannock should go to war with the Blackfeet.

From the Falls of the Snake my journey was extremely slow. Many of the emigrants were short of provisions, which deficiency I had to supply. Others had difficulties among themselves which I was obliged to settle. The grass was very scarce, and their stock would scatter during the night, so that frequently my men would have to spend hours looking for them in the morning. We cured their sick, fed their destitute, hunted, and in some instances drove their teams, mended their wagons, hauled their goods, settled their disputes, and kept them moving on to Oregon.

Two men died along the route and one was drowned in Snake River. With these exceptions every man, woman and child that had traveled under my escort reached the settlements in safety.

From the best information in my possession I estimate the emigration to Oregon and Washington Territory this year at 10,000 souls, about 4,000 of whom I think crossed the Snake River at the Fort Hall ferry. From my own observation I am satisfied that a better road for emigrants may be found on the north side of Snake River than the one on the south side. The pre-

cise point at which that river should be crossed I am not prepared to decide. I know there is a good road from near Salmon Falls to Boise, having traveled down on that route in the year 1842, but as to the character of the country above that point on the north side, I have no reliable information.

The recent gold discoveries on Boise River will doubtless attract large parties from the States next season. Should such be the case, and large numbers of emigrants with their families flock to that country, I fear that unless some protection is furnished by the Government the Indians will make an indiscriminate slaughter.

I have the honor to report we have arrived, all well, and to be,

Very respectfully, your obedient servant.

MEDOREM CRAWFORD, Captain
and Assistant Quartermaster.

II. "We Had a Fight"

Note: This is a routine military report from Captain L. L. Williams, First Oregon Infantry, of an engagement between Indians and a small detachment of U. S. troops on Selvie's River in Oregon Territory on September 23, 1865. The original report is one of many hundred piled in dusty, unread rows in the archives of the War Department in Washington, containing vivid descriptions, although told in the fighting man's plain, unembroidered language, of the innumerable Indian fights on the western frontier which are still unrecorded pages of American history. The Civil War at the same period detracted attention at the time, and time itself and the dust of all the years have kept them unknown.

"To the Commanding Officer.

"Sir: I have the honor to report that we had a fight with Indians (12 men of Company H under my command, and 75 or 100 Indians of Harney Lake Valley) which commenced at 12 noon on September 23 and ended at 7 p. m. the same day. In the morning of that day I set out with my men from camp on the Selvie's River to scout a few miles down the valley to locate a permanent camp, and to search for a place to cut wild hay for our horses. We proceeded down the valley 7 miles, when we discovered the fresh trail of two Indians on foot going in the direction of Harney Lake. Following the trail a short distance, the Indians were discovered about one mile distant entering a sagebrush plain.

"We immediately gave chase, not expecting to overtake them, but soon discovered that one appeared to be a young boy of 9 or 10

years, who impeded their progress, so that we soon found ourselves gaining on them. After a pursuit of nearly 7 miles, and when within long range of our guns, they were met by two mounted Indians from the opposite side of the sage plain. The mounted Indians quickly swung them up on their horses, riding double, and made good their escape.

"We had been marching at double quick over the sagebrush plain for seven miles and consequently the men were very tired. I therefore ordered a rest, placing two sentinels to guard the camp. We rested for an hour, and that hour's delay came near proving fatal to the entire scouting party.

"A solitary Indian, mounted on a fine gray horse, suddenly appeared in sight, and riding at full-speed completely circled, discovered our number. Galloping off a half-mile he fired his gun and sounded the war-whoop. Almost immediately we discovered 13 mounted Indians riding toward us rapidly, and as that was just our number, we had no fears for our own safety. As they came up they circled us on every side firing into our ranks. We promptly returned the fire but, as we were 16 miles from camp, we now turned toward camp and steered straight for a high mountain point which lay directly between us and camp, and which would make the distance much nearer than to go around the mountain.

"The Indians kept up their firing and howling, and were soon reinforced by 20 or 30 horsemen and 25 or more foot-men, who joined in the conflict. We were in a hornet's nest with Indians on every side, horse and foot mixed up promiscuously, and firing became very brisk front, flank, and rear; but we kept them at a distance of 250 to 500 yards with our long range rifles.

"We were still moving directly for the mountain, believing that we would be safe if we could reach it; at least, if it gave us no other advantage it would be the most direct route to our camp where we had reinforcements. The firing was brisk on both sides. The bullets were whizzing among us. We were not sufficient in numbers to protect all our sides at one time.

"When within half a mile of the mountain some 20 or 25 horsemen fell in ahead of us

and ascended the mountain at the very place for which we were striving, and we had the mortification of seeing them take position in the rocks to cut us down if we advanced. At this time I could see but one alternative, and that was to turn direct to the right and travel parallel to the mountain, and make for Selvie's river some five miles off.

"The men were almost exhausted, their lips parched with thirst, and the entire distance to the river was one level, sandy sage plain. As we turned the Indians pursued us, most of them along the foot of the mountain to our left. I now placed Corporal Johnson to guard the left flank and Private McPherson to guard the rear, the places from which the most danger came, and the men were ordered in single file, fifteen paces apart, and parallel to the mountain. In this manner we marched to Selvie's River with a constant shower of bullets falling among us or whistling over our heads.

"The sagebrush in many places, being of heavy growth, gave the Indians favorable opportunities, and some of them sneaked in to fire at us from 75 to 100 yards, the Indians immediately fading away again in the brush. On approaching the river Private Alexander Griffin was severely wounded in the left hip but continued to hobble along unaided.

"As we reached the willows on the river the Indians struck the river above and below us. My men were so tired they could scarcely march, and nearly choked with thirst. My mouth was so parched that I could scarcely give command. I ordered three men through the stream to protect our front without a moment's pause. Three others were faced about to guard the rear. The remainder took a hasty drink and then relieved the men on guard.

"Our delay at the stream was not over one and a half minutes, and at the command 'fall in on the east side' every man was instantly at his post, and we marched at double quick for about three hundred yards from the willows along the stream to an open, level plain. A few horsemen were in front of us but the bulk of the Indians had halted along the stream. We now turned up the valley in the direction of our camp un-

der a brisk fire from the enemy. Private Smith was at this time slightly wounded in the left foot.

"It was now about sundown, and our camp still four miles off—so far that we could not hope that the troops in camp would hear our guns. After sundown a mounted Indian with a blazing torch struck out from the river and fired the grass over a stretch two miles in length, and since it was in our line of march, cutting us off from camp. We continued to push on, however (heavy firing kept up by both sides all of the time), passed through the fire line safely, and maneuvered to strike the river two miles and a half below our camp.

"The ground was level, no very high grass, and but little sage brush. Soon we were sure they would hear the firing in our camp and we would receive reinforcements, and we all breathed a good deal easier although there was still some danger as they occasionally fired whole volleys at us, and the bullets peppered the grass around us and went whistling by dangerously close.

"Just at this time I was stunned by a volley of five or six shots from directly in front of us. I looked around expecting to see one-half of my men fall dead, but none were hit, by a miracle. The men were at once ordered into a sink-hole on our left at sufficient depth to hide them. From this position we had several good shots, not over sixty yards distant, at those who fired the last volley, and we made them pay for it.

"In this position, with a living circle of fire around us, I rested the men a half-hour. It was now dark but the light from the prairie fire extending up and down the river

for some distance made it impossible for us to move toward our camp without placing us directly between the Indians in the willows along the river and the blazing fires on the prairie. I could see no other way of escape than to double back on our track, which was accordingly done by double-quicking it out of our position and placing the Indians between us and the fire and making them the better targets.

"We traveled four or five miles in a course directly away from our camp and then made a large circle to the northward and finally gained our camp successfully at 2 a. m. on the morning of the 24th, having traveled 45 miles afoot without food, with one drink of water, and having been under fire for over seven hours by Indians who outnumbered us six or seven to one. For over 15 miles we trudged through a sandy sagebrush plain with bad going.

"It is certain that we killed fifteen Indians and wounded a number, as well as horses. Our two wounded were brought in safely. The men all acquitted themselves creditably. Not an order or command was given but what it was instantly obeyed. Corporal Johnson and Private McPherson are entitled to great credit for their valuable services, without which the whole detachment might have been wiped out. Our long range rifles and superior marksmanship gave us advantages that rendered their superior numbers far less formidable than if we had been armed with ordinary rifles. I am very respectfully your obedient servant,

L. L. WILLIAMS

Captain,

Commanding Detachment."

FANTASY

CATHERINE STUART MACLEOD

Over the dark night
Peace has descended;
Jasmine bells ring softly
Their fainter perfume;
Magnolias are heavy with
fragrance. Their

Blossom-laden
Limbs sway gently
In a white jade
cascade
down
to the silvery tide.

BOOK SHELF

Under the Editorship of Pat V. Morrisette

In Tragic Life. Vardis Fisher. Caxton Printers. 1932. \$2.50.

The evidences of sincerity, fullness, passion and truth are everywhere apparent in Vardis Fisher's novel *In Tragic Life*. With his willingness to recognize and to express the pain, the futility, the suffering and the disgusts of life there can be no reasonable quarrel, for these things are patent in the facts of existence: blood, death and disappointments are not startling facts which catch the mature mind unawares. Certainly in his peaceful acceptance of these troubling pains, in his quiet concern for character and locale, this novelist may be compared to Thomas Hardy. And even further, in the lyric suffering of his central character, there is some of the insight and concern and some of the poetry of disillusionment which also sustains George Meredith. Or possibly one might compare for its fullness of treatment this book to *Wolf Solent*, and find it not unequal for depth. What charge can be brought against an author who is sincere? Against an author who has obviously tried to stick to the facts, and who has obviously adopted and accepted methods of realism, and added to them the dignity of a passionate spirit? To reach a partial evaluation, even, of such a novel one is thrown upon a consideration of the premises upon which it is based, and not upon an examination of the thing in itself, as the book readily falls into the type of the realistic novel as it was anciently nurtured by Zola. Is such realism adequate for the portrayal of life? Realism is highly selective, and that realism which we find in Hardy, Zola and Fisher tends to select the lyric suffering of life, and tends to avoid its lyric happiness. Then what about the thesis? Is life tragic? Must we accept the brutalities, the disgusts, the disappointments of life as tragic? If we do so we must eliminate an opposite view such as George Meredith (who supplies the title of the book) held when he outlined for us the idea of the Comic Spirit. We must also dismiss the aloof, intellectual and ironic laughter of Samuel Butler, who puts the difficulties of youth into a more intellectual, harder perspective. We must dismiss the Rabelaisians who laughed, and still laugh, and drink blood and call it good red wine. There is a divine comedy in our pains and errors, and tragedy only in our thick stupidity which keeps us from smiling at ourselves. The value of this novel, I believe, lies not

in its soberness, and its heralded acceptances of "the facts of life," but in the acceptance of a method of presentation which brings the modern novel back to a resemblance of an epic in which a central figure lives, grows, and reaches some freedom by coming to grips with life.

Eugene, Oregon

Pat V. Morrisette

Portulacas in the Wheat. Grace Stone Coates. Caxton Printers. 1932. \$1.50.

To go directly and simply to the central significance of this book of poetry is as difficult a thing to do as to slap the back of a porcupine with unaffected friendliness. There are so many sharp and various points, so many contradictory angles, that each poem must be considered a thing in itself, and must not be related to the rest in the hope of finding some underlying philosophy. In *Toward Wisdom* we are advised in musical language of the importance of the awareness of sensation in the understanding and the appreciation of life. This theme is carried forward in the contemplation of the beautiful wild blossoms (the Portulacas) which are found in the wheat. The same theme helps us to understand those poems whose inspiration is based upon an awareness of Nature, for instance, *April Hills*, *Possess the Day*, *Coming*. But somewhere as we read we see that Mrs. Coates turns away from sensation as the basis of her poetry. For the pure feeling of *Hills* we have exchanged the imaginative flight of *White Magic*; then from the fancy of this poem we are plunged into a study of character, of a poem on the affections. We are lulled into a sweet contemplation of life, and then rudely pierced with an epigram. We are urged to seek the illusion of life in its beauty, and then we are shocked into an awakening by a poem of harsh and bitter disillusionment. Sensation, fancy, pure feeling, thought, jostle for the center of the stage, and one after the other attain their goal. Irony, bitterness, joy, rebellion, submission, thumb noses at each other. There is the speech of realism in *Eagles and Catbirds*, *Country Doctor*. There is the mark of the Latin epigram in *Sophistication*, short enough to be quoted:

"A very hard green little peach," he mused,
"Unmellowed yet by life, and like as not
"Never to ripen," but the place he bruised
Developed from his touch a rotten spot.

The result of this variety is not confusion but the very spirit of delight. Our sallies

to get at some consistent philosophy of life fall short, but every poem calls to be read again. Indeed, she is like the *Caltrop*:

Bed her as you will, in triple

Self-advantage, compliment,

And creature comfort—thrust intent

Her fourth spike waits for a foot to cripple.

Eugene, Oregon

Pat V. Morrisette

Wah'kon-Tah. John Joseph Mathews. University of Oklahoma Press. 1932. \$2.50.

A new approach to a very old problem may be found in the pages of this volume—provided the reader himself enjoys detachment, restraint and an absence of "hokum." Otherwise the book chosen by the Literary Guild as its offering for December may fall short, in a time of taut social relations and rasped nerves, as a literary cocktail. For there is neither cheap sentiment nor noisy controversy in its pages; perhaps its greatest excellence is its apparent absence of problem. The ease with which this unheated relation of the story of the Great Osage nation avoids both the tiresome wrangling and the shallow sentimentalism most often present in contributions to racial literature at once releases tension, rather than increasing it; and the fact that it is a member of a "submerged" race who can thus afford to be magnanimous to the white man makes it all the more interesting—though not entirely surprising to students of racial traits. There is embodied in its pages the dream of a man, the large-hearted Major Laban J. Miles, who cherished a belief that the qualities of his own race might be tempered acceptably by inclusion of the finest virtues of the native American—his dignity, sincerity and stoic endurance of pain—at the same time the red man was shedding some of the cruelties and crudities of his own ancient practice. *Wah'Kon-Tah*, sub-titled "The Osage and the White Man's Road," presents, quite undramatically, an impact between two races.

Its quiet pages, proceeding through a series of illuminated sketches rather than by connected narrative, still manages to present with clarity, and without bitterness, the result of this impact. There is little detail as to ritual and ceremonial, and much as to the moods and life of the prairie. It is the Indian rooted in his native blackjack hills that appears, with his uncanny kinship with creatures of wood and prairie. There is little of the starch of fact: (Notes as to history of the removal of the Great Osage nation from its original home in what is now Missouri to its present location, with record of treaties with the United States government reside in an appendix); but there is much about people: character sketches of this chief or that—wise or vain, proud or amiable. Most of all, the character of the key-figure emerges: the Major Laban Miles mentioned, for many years agent on the

Oklahoma reservation of the Osages, who watched over their interests in the transition stage from wildness to "civilization"—in this case attended by wealth from oil fields. The disillusion of the man who believed of his wards "that if they were allowed to develop in their own way and retain their admirable characteristics, they might add brilliance to the brilliance which he felt sure would some day be America's" is implicit in the process, though lightly stated. Long before Chapter Nineteen is reached, with its quiet, half ironical portrait of the improved Indian, made over from the spiritually aware "savage" to the stout and comfortable owner of over-stuffed furniture and machines-that-run-by-themselves (with negro chauffeurs), the result of the impact appears—inevitably, of course. *Eagle-That-Dreams* still rises in the still dawn to pray to *Wah-Tze-Go*—the sun, the grandfather—"that my feet may go along road that is straight," even though he rises from a twin bed to do so. One feels certain that his immaculately dressed son, whose "black hair was slicked down till it shone like black leather" will not do so—whatever that may mean in loss of spiritual values, if there be loss. The problem is no less poignant through understatement . . . Still, there is a goodly crew of imitation white men to offset any debits. And since "that which the children of Earth do not comprehend as they travel the roads of Earth, and which becomes clear to them only when they have passed on the Great Mysteries is *Wah'Kon-Tah*," it is *Wah'Kon-Tah*, no doubt, who will solve the problems of these children of earth also.

The style and diction of the book are worth comment. It is possible that the artistic enfranchisement of the red man may follow as naturally as that of the black in music and poetry, which has taken place so gradually during the last decade. The writer of the present book is a member of the Osage tribe, with the culture of America and England superadded. The fine clear printing of the book loses nothing of its interest.

Eugene, Oregon

Alice Henson Ernst

Indian Removal. The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians. Grant Foreman. University of Oklahoma Press. 1932.

This book is an account of the removal of the five "civilized" tribes of southern Indians to Indian Territory. These tribes were the Choctaws, Creeks, Chickasaws, Cherokees, and Seminoles. About 1830, when the government began its policy of removal, these Indians had comfortable homes and were prosperous farmers. Within ten years the Whites stripped them of all their property, drove them from their country, demoralized them, and broke their spirit.

The material for this book was drawn

from government documents, published and unpublished, from contemporary newspapers, from reports of missionaries, and from letters and journals of spectators and participants. The author apparently studied every available source of information.

The plan of the book is to give a detailed and chronological account of the removal of each of the five tribes. The author expresses no personal feeling and uses few adjectives. He presents cumulative evidence that forms a terrific indictment of the cruelty and fraud by which the white traders and speculators in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi were ruining the Indians. These men were stealing the land and other property of these Indians and were supported in their sordid conduct by the state governments. President Jackson, Lewis Cass, and others high in office showed a cynical indifference in fulfilling the promises of protection and justice which they had made. For the homes and farms the Indians were compelled to surrender they were promised money, clothing, food, and new homes. The evidence shows that the government and the greedy contractors who removed them exposed them to hunger, nakedness, and disease. The only bright spot is the sympathy of the Army, who sought to mitigate their sufferings.

The book is not pleasant reading. It is, however, a scholarly contribution to the history of the relations of Whites and Indians, and demands attention from all students of our Indian problem.

Missoula, Montana Paul C. Phillips

Josh Billings, Yankee Humorist. By Cyril Clemens. International Mark Twain Society. 1933. \$2.00.

When the sayings of a man who spoke and wrote under an assumed name have been held in grateful memory by the public for close to seventy-five years it is perhaps high time to dedicate a memorial to him disclosing his actual name. People, pretty generally, have forgotten, if they ever knew, that Henry Wheeler Shaw was born in Lanceboro, Massachusetts, in 1818, and died in Monterey, California, in 1885, and that in between these dates he lived the typical life of his times, as a Yankee rover in the pioneer west, as an Ohio river steamboat owner, as a real estate agent and auctioneer, and finally as an itinerant popular lecturer. But nearly every one has heard of Josh Billings, laughter-maker to the post-Civil War nation, retailer of homespun wisdom, and near-genius in the art of grotesque spelling; or, at least, on one occasion or another, has heard quoted with approval his: "It is better to know less than to know so much that ain't so." And for such reasons as these he seems deserving of a biography. Even if it be pointed out, as it well might be, that he belongs definitely to the low-brow tradition of American let-

ters, and that he was platitudinous to an extreme, crude in his tastes, and narrowly moralistic, it must still be said that in his unabashed slouchiness, his continually eyeing of the main chance, and his almost domestic animal delight in easily won attention, he is thoroughly representative of his period, and as such merits some study if only that he may be kept in mind for what he really was and did. For it is partly by contemplation of the folk-strands of our past, no matter how unflattering they may prove, that we shall design and weave for ourselves a worthy future.

Mr. Cyril Clemens, president of the International Mark Twain Society, and a relative of our greatest humorist, was obviously the man to undertake the long overdue memoir of Josh Billings. Though he is no expert workman in the literary trade, he has performed his self-imposed task with sincerity and devotion, and with genuine affection for his subject. Somehow or other the very qualities of unskillfulness and rough finish in his book render it all the more appropriate as the life story of one who made a virtue of being relatively unlettered. Nothing like so much can be said for the Introduction to the volume supplied by Mr. Rupert Hughes. That is a piece of inexcusably sloppy writing. Portland, Oregon V. L. O. Chittick

Wheat Women. Nard Jones. Duffield and Green. 1933. \$2.00.

The wheat country of eastern Washington Mr. Jones is rapidly making his own literary territory. Whenever he writes of it his understanding becomes clear, his dramatic sense tense, his satirical power effective, and his imagination lyrical. In this latest story, which is by far the best, in developing narrative interest and in the comprehending portrayal of persons, of his three published novels, the burning of the wheat, which comes as a natural crisis in the story, is strongly imagined and both dramatically presented. Its power even carries the melodrama, and the horror, of the wife-beating that it immediately leads into. Mr. Jones has likewise made good progress since the writing of his last novel, in the shaping of a sustained story and the conduct of it convincingly—sweeping it into action, steadily developing it to a major crisis, and resolving it into its significance.

The story is really Todd Lynch's and not the wheat women's. It relates the settling of land by Jackson Lynch, the continued rooting in it of Todd Lynch, followed by John Lynch's irresistible pull back to it. Todd Lynch, inarticulate except when roused to great anger, simple in philosophy as in economics—trusting the earth and its principle of reward for labor as sufficient light for his life, working prodigiously with his first wife and endeavoring to live as a retired

country gentleman in a wheat town (Walla Walla) with his second wife, thirty years younger than he and a fleshly lure, and finding in it only senility until the depression of wheat prices forces him to the harvest fields, solid, sensible, indulgent, tolerant, loving—in short, a real person and a person wedded to a real environment—rises to memorability as a developed character and seizes upon the affection of the reader. Beside him the women seem less real, Cora as a drudge, Julie as a villainess, the society women as ideas for satire. Todd lives and breathes and has his being. And yet woman's story on wheat land marches strongly through the novel, too.

Missoula, Montana

H. G. Merriam

Mark Twain's America. Bernard DeVoto. Little, Brown. 1932. \$1.00.

This new work on Mark Twain deserves high praise for its excellent study of our great humorist's Western setting. Mr. DeVoto, himself a westerner, has attacked a problem too long neglected, that of Mark Twain's fundamental sympathy and association with the frontier temperament and culture. He shows us that frontier "examining itself," recording itself, and entertaining itself" by the native folk-art of the oral tale. Twain becomes thus a product of a real, if often violent and crude, native culture. He flourished from the start in a vigorous, masculine mode of expression which he accepted as his own, even as later he reflected the frontiersman's irreverence in the face of Old World traditions, and later still his disillusionment with the product of frontier progress and his bewilderment before the problems of a more complex society. Incidentally, Mr. DeVoto makes short work of the Van Wyck Brooks' myth of a repressed Shelley tortured by a barren frontier life.

On the other hand, Mr. DeVoto's very exuberance in defence of the frontier (perhaps an unconscious proof of a part of his thesis) leads him to underestimate the New England of Mark Twain's day, and to overstate the shock of Twain upon the "genteel tradition" of an "aseptic" East with a thin culture of pretense—this in the land of Thoreau, Emerson and Garrison. His footnotes, too, are too often an academic digression of nose-thumbing at other academicians.

If this fine work should achieve a future revision for greater unity in its central thesis and some truer balance, it would take front rank as about the best book yet on Mark Twain and his essential westernness.

Laramie, Wyoming

Wilson O. Clough

The Padre on Horesback. A sketch of Eusebio Francisco Kino, S. J., Apostle to the Pimas. Bolton, Herbert Eugene. Sonora Press. 1932. \$2.00.

This book is a concise account of the life

of Father Kino, greatest of the Jesuit pioneers in western North America, through whose achievements Pimeria Alta (northern Sonora and southern Arizona) was opened to Spanish penetration. Over a decade ago Professor Bolton translated and edited *Kino's historical memoir of Pimeria Alta* (2v., Cleveland, 1919), for which the King of Italy honored him with a commandership in the Order of the Crown of Italy; now he presents a more popular but no less authoritative account of Kino's career, of his explorations and missionary activity in the "American Southwest," the basis of subsequent Spanish occupation of the Californias. Thoroughly readable, full of that delicious literary flavor so typical of Bolton's style. *The padre on horseback* is excellent for collateral reading in high school and university courses in Western history, as well as for the layman.

An outstanding feature of the book is its strikingly attractive format. Rarely does a work of its character and price come to us with so pleasing an appearance. If the nicety of its binding and printing, the clear-cut drawings and decorative chapter headings, and the excellent cover maps are criteria of the caliber of Western printing, it is sincerely to be hoped that we shall see more books on the West published in the West. Berkeley, California

Lewis W. Bealer

Gold in Them Hills. C. B. Glascock. Bobbs Merrill. 1932. \$3.50.

The frontispiece of this book epitomizes an era and a type, and sets the tone of the account that follows, for it catches a true desert prospector in the act of raising his lonely stone pile, his monument to the lure that keeps him forever wandering from desert ledge to desert ledge, a gaunt, wiry, self-contained seeker for gold. To him and his burro this book is truly dedicated, even though it be the story of the mining camps of Nevada.

Mr. Glascock was apparently the man to record the tale of the Nevada boom of the first decade of the twentieth century. He knew and knows the actors in it, he shared the fever and contributed his bit to the files of short-lived, if lively, newspapers. The setting of the story was in the great desert of the United States. The mining camp psychology was a duplicate of previous booms—California, Colorado, Montana, and other western states. But the desert and the fact that this was the last big strike, and the last before autos took the place of mule teams, made the story worth the telling. Mr. Glascock records the first grim days, the "Tonopah death," then the hectic days of boom, the secret "high grading" of miners with specially devised "corsets" for carrying off their choice bits, the startling rise, the melancholy fall.

Tonopah and Goldfield are central in the book, though other towns get their portion of record. Some of the men involved were later famous—Charlie Schwab, Tex Rickard, Frank Lowden, senators and governors of Nevada. Some still haunt the old scenes, a dwindling group of hopefuls who have not forgotten how to survive desert heat and cold. Most of the camps have left hardly a trace. In a few places lone buildings crumble in the desert, and a few are still towns. It is a fantastic story, yet true; and Mr. Glasscock has put it down before it passed into pure legend. His book deserves a place in western history.

Laramie, Wyoming

W. O. Clough

The Boat of Longing. O. E. Rolvaag. Harpers. 1933. \$2.50.

When cold reason and an attempt at ruthless self-analysis have failed to answer the question, "Why are we rooted in a foreign world when our souls are weary, longing for the world in which they belong?" there is release if not reply to be found in *The Boat of Longing*. This romance by O. E. Rolvaag is not a tale of defeated desire to experience on earth the transcendent joys of supernatural existence; it is a narrative composed of loosely connected incidents wherein the world of reality and the world of spirit are fused and become one.

In contrast with *Giants in the Earth* and *Peder Victorious* this book has no plot and no full, clear characterizations. For these reasons *The Boat of Longing* probably will not attract a great audience. Jo, his wife Anna, Nils, the changeling-like girl, Zalma, who appears briefly and does not return to the story, Kristine Dahl, and the mad drunk poet are people who have seen the Boat. Per Hansen, Otto Hansen, and their cheap, breezy friends are merely ones who have not seen the Boat.

The first part of the romance, beautifully and simply written, tells the myth of the vessel that sailing out of the west beckoned with such spell that those who saw followed. Rolvaag does not explain the boat; does not contrast it with a real boat, nor make any exposition of its moral and spiritual significance. He tells three separate stories to verify the reality of the mystic ship and the validity of its strange influence. One accepts the stories and draws one's own conclusions concerning the meaning of the Boat to those who see it.

It is when the strange girl, Zalma, has been sent away that Jo, Anna and Nils see the ship. Nils in an agony of inarticulate grief rows towards it, but, his fisherman's lust betraying him, he casts anchor to throw his line among the saithe as the gleaming sails disappear. Unable after that to be content at home, Nils visions a wider life and seeks to go away. His dream is trans-

formed into a desire to go to America. Per's Hansen's tales of America, translated from his brother's letters, picture a land lush with the things the heart desires.

To Nils Minneapolis is at first an enchanted city; it glitters with happiness; its people are youthful and gay and guileless. But as he moves through a series of experiences disjointed and apparently unrelated a nameless pain comes to rest in Nils's heart. His wisdom is a vast innocence; his skill is to bring music from a fiddle; his wish is to learn the meaning of the life about him. But his wisdom, his talent and his desire are not enough. He feels the evil around him but he has no weapons to use against it. Only Kristin Dahl and the Stril understand Nils. With the others, especially with Per Hansen to whom Nils is bound by an imposed obligation to protect, there is no means of communication.

Rolvaag understood the kind of loneliness that gnawed at Nils's heart and sympathized with and comprehended the terrible unity of his nature that was made of opposing forces. In brief incidents, by implications and suggestions so tenuous as often to be illusive the author awakens in the reader pity for Nils and comprehension of him.

There are awkward places in the book. The long narrative of the stranger on the train adds little to our understanding of Nils. The stranger's purpose in the book is to take Per Hansen away and thus make it impossible for Nils to write home to Norway. The fact that Nils cannot write to his beloved parents because he cannot lie to Per's father concerning the disappearance of his son taxes one's credulity as the fantasy in the book does not. The last of the book is concerned with the journey of Jo, the father of Nils, to America.

Jo never sees his son. But the journey, a factual defeat and cruel disappointment, is transformed for Jo into a beautiful triumph by means pitifully natural and inevitable. In Jo as he sails out to meet The Boat all conflicts are reconciled.

This book, obviously written before Rolvaag had mastered the technique of his craft, nonetheless opens to us more completely than do the other novels, I think, the strange, sensitive depths of the artist's heart and mind, and more swiftly and simply arouses in the responsive reader the humanizing emotions of sympathy and pity.

Eugene, Oregon

Margaret Clarke

The Sign of the Buffalo Skull. Peter O. Lamb. Stokes. 1932. \$2.00.

Jim Bridger could hike one hundred miles in a day. He had stomach enough to marry three squaws. He was among the first white men to visit Yellowstone National park. His tales of this region, his anecdotes of the Great Salt lake were never believed, until

later authenticated by polite officials. He was the first teller of tall tales, and started more lies about the wonders of the west than any single chamber of commerce. He was a trapper, guide, scout, trader, and a builder of the Far West. So glorious were his voice, his gestures, his manners, that wherever his name crosses the pages of the hundreds of memoirs of the west, a new life and admiration slips into the style. Mr. Lamb has fully recognized the importance and worth of his subject who is the center of *The Sign of the Buffalo Skull*. The facts about Jim Bridger are simply and plainly told, and to one entirely ignorant of the man, the book would be a revelation. Lamb, however, does not recreate the adventure and spirit of that life, but retells the story with all the caution of an historian. His narrative is full of academic asides, such as "none of the published accounts mentions Jim Bridger's name in connection with this incident." However, his careful consideration of biographical facts does not detract from the soundness of the book. The many critics who cannot believe the facts of the average western thriller should read western history to confound their imagination. The vigorous drawings in black and white by James Daugherty are a surprise. It is likewise a surprise to find this dignified treatment of a westerner under such a title, and in a list of popular boys' stories. The wonder is equal to Bridger's early escapes. "How did you escape?" he was once asked. "I didn't," he replied. "We were both killed."

Eugene, Oregon

Pat V. Morrisette

Along the Arkansas. Anna Lewis. The Southwest Press. 1932. \$2.50.

If it were not that its attractive title will appeal to those interested in regional history this book is not deserving of even the briefest notice. The proofreading is unbelievably poor and there are innumerable other errors and inaccuracies which can scarcely be the fault of the printer or proofreader. There are also too many places in which the style and composition are open to criticism well within the capabilities of the ordinary high school student. Even disregarding these glaring defects, the book is a disappointment in that it covers only the period down to 1800—a limitation in no way indicated on the title page.

Eugene, Oregon

Dan E. Clark

A Child's Book Appeals to a Twelve-Year-Old Reader.

Uncle Bill. Will James. Scribners. 1932. \$2.00.

I wonder who Scootie was, the person to whom Will James dedicates his most recent book. Certainly she was a lucky girl, to be able to spend all summer at a real western ranch with an old cowboy like Uncle Bill to teach her and her brother Kip all about

range life. In his preface Will James writes, "In this story I'm having a boy and a girl coming west from a big city. They ask many questions of the kind that's asked me often and I'm putting 'em in the care of Uncle Bill to answer all their questions . . . He coaches 'em in a way where I think the reader will catch on to things near as well by reading as the kids did while on the trail with the old cowboy."

Uncle Bill does answer fully many of the questions I have wondered about while reading other books by Will James. The next time I get a chance to ride a horse I'll know how to saddle and ride him. *Uncle Bill* is more nearly like Mr. James's *Cowboys North and South*, which tells about the handling of cattle and the customs of cowboys, than any of his other books. But *Uncle Bill* is different in that where the other book tells about things in general this story tells about things in detail—the difference between a hackamore and a halter, how to get a meal in an old tin can, how a lasso is made, the importance of putting out a fire. Most of Will James's books do not go out of the way to give such information, but this one is written for that purpose.

I am sure that if you read *Uncle Bill* you will enter into the free spirit of cowboy life, even if there is no way for you to use the knowledge you gain. The story is told in cowboy language, and the book is delightfully illustrated by the author.

Missoula, Montana

Alison W. Merriam

Clover Breath. Arthur Truman Merrill. The Driftwind Press. 1932.

The Desperate Years. Arthur Truman Merrill. Parker, Medford, Mass. 1932.

"The poems in this volume were inspired by my love for the people and scenery of my native New England," writes Mr. Merrill. The poems are a fond looking-back, in this instance from California, upon crystal mornings in Vermont hills, mowing hay, Vermont persons who were neighborhood characters, New England flowers. In this thin volume the reader will find none of the banalities common to volumes of such format, but frequent bell-like clarity of song and cleanness of expression, with occasional phrase of beauty. Mr. Merrill can be trusted to sing true. This is his second volume of 1932, the other being "Desperate Years."

In this purposeful poem—"a symbolic poem that deals with the spiritual and intellectual chaos of *The Desperate Years* following the World War"—the idea has submerged the poet; only in an occasional line or short passage does the poet—and there is a real one in Mr. Merrill—gain the upper hand.

California Writer's Club Poems, 1932. Privately printed.

These poems of 1932 as a whole attain a

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ADAM CARGO

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"I wouldn't build a fire," he said. "Smoke can be seen a long way. We'd best get going . . . that is, if you want this horse."

They rode out of the canyon toward the west and came to a trail running up the side of the great black ridge. The trail was so steep in places that they were obliged to stop and rest the horses.

"It's a hard climb," said Palo, "but it will save us quite a bit of time between here and Santa Fe."

Adam maintained a thoughtful silence as they rode on, wondering at the great golden-haired man and about the horse he himself was riding. He stroked the animal's neck during a rest period, and looked for a brand on it. "He's marked on the left hip," said Omar. "An O. Z."

"If I owe you anything for him, I'll pay now," said Adam.

Omar smiled. "You owe me only a night's sleep and a good meal. I stole him from a Mexican outfit on the trail. We better turn him loose when we get to Santa Fe."

* * *

They came to Santa Fe together, then. This was the way they became partners. It was important to me as an audience. Anything could happen now. There was a reason for them being together.

I tried to picture them there in that early plaza, the one immense, with hair like sunlight and eyes like turquoise, the other small and dark. It was a delightful contrast.

Adam was indeed small. As an old man he looked almost frail, but one understood there was the staunchness and vitality of the hills in the little body. His hair was very black and thin; his eyes were like two shoe-buttons, sharp and glistening. They had not changed by the time I came to know him. But the hair had grown white, and his thin, wrinkled, brown face was framed in a snowy beard just long enough to cover his collar. He still moved quickly. In those days he must have moved like lightning.

I found some others in the city who could look back into the years and remember him. No one, however, remembered Palo.

He was not a gambler, but Adam was. After the two men had come to Santa Fe, Adam could be seen almost any evening in the Trail House. Under his wide black hat with its red silk band his thin, dark face was immobile, expressionless. Once more, luck seemed to have become his ally. He won heavily, and began to establish a reputation among the wagon men, the traders and trappers, the hunters, merchants and vacqueros with whom he played.

These men knew nothing of him, for he never spoke about himself, and his cool aloofness discouraged inquisitiveness. He was a subject of conversation, but he was not one with whom to converse casually. Men saw him spend recklessly at times, and they saw him refuse to spend. They listened to the few words he uttered, and learned nothing of his affairs, of his origin, of his life . . . at all.

One man swore he had seen Adam in San Francisco, recalling clearly that Adam was a dealer in the Golden Gate House. Possibly Adam had got into trouble in California, probably over a woman. It was not likely he had got into difficulties because of dishonesty . . . he was an honest player.

Another man thought Adam had come from Kansas. He remembered seeing him in Lawrence. Still another was sure he had been a saloon proprietor in San Antonio.

These opinions, speculations and presumptions, including many more, reached Adam through Omar, and the two men laughed about them.

One evening Adam stood in the Trail House watching the play at a table where a game for high stakes was in progress. He was unaware that a ragged young Mexican boy stood beside him gazing up into his dark, pointed face. In a moment of stillness, when only the sound of money dropping on the table was to be heard, the boy touched Adam's leg and spoke to him.

"From where do you come?" It asked with unrestrained curiosity.

The men sitting and standing around the table looked at Adam. For the moment play was suspended. Anger showed in his eyes. The shoe-buttons in their narrow slits flitted and grew cold. But almost at once the

anger died. He placed a hand on the child's head.

"From the Valley of Singing, poco mucho," he said.

He turned away, and went out of the room.

And then he took me back there again, to my surprise. Suddenly he was telling me more about the Valley of Singing. It was a great evening for me. Perhaps he enjoyed it, too. He talked as if he were eager to tell me, taking his little nip now and then and gazing thoughtfully at the glass each time he drained it.

He was born in a tiny settlement of fishermen and trappers on the right bank of the Mississippi River near Carlinville, Missouri. The shanty in which he lived stood near the end of a bar, a point of land jutting out into the river. Behind the bar were great areas of swamp and back-waters. In places the bar was wide enough to permit farming, and some of the colony cultivated small patches of corn and potatoes.

Mace Cargo, his father, was a trapper, working in the winter months in the frozen swamps. In the spring he took his skins to Carlinville, going up the river by boat and drifting home again with the current. He was a man who kept to himself a great deal of the time, a man who had fished and trapped and hunted all of his life. It appeared that the quietness of these vocations was reflected in his nature.

There were few men in the country who knew more about the river. Other fishermen and trappers came to the Cargo shanty for advice from him. If he had been drinking he might talk with them at length, and on rare occasions relate some of his own experiences. It was very likely, however, that he would stop talking suddenly, and it was difficult to get another word out of him. It was as if all at once he had become afraid of talking too much, of telling some secret.

He paid little attention to his son; but he was not unkind nor entirely neglectful. When he had been drinking he seemed not to know that Adam was on earth. When he was sober, and it was necessary to speak, he did so briefly and quietly. He never failed to advise Adam in matters of importance. The advice would come in a few spoken words, and in such a low tone that Adam would

have to strain his ears to catch them; after that there was no more said.

Mace and Marie, Adam's mother, often got a little drunk together. Sometimes they got to fighting. Liquor revealed a strange side of her nature. She might be cross or irritable, or as easily sentimental and loving. She could not be depended upon when she was in her cups; and the liquor seemed to affect her differently each time she drank enough to make her a little tipsy. She would become mysterious, secretive, silent, or she would be loud, talkative, boisterous, rough. She and Mace would make love as if they had only just been married, or as if they hadn't yet been married; and the next time they would act like two dogs fighting over a bone, howl and push each other. Mace might have been harmless always when he was drunk had it not been for her changeableness. He seemed to be tied to her with an invisible rope, and he went along doing as she did, angry if she was angry, kind if she was kind.

In the summer and fall, he would steal from the farms on the high ground inland from the river. He would go off at night with other men, and return with gunny sacks filled with squash and melons, fruit and corn, and perhaps a chicken or two. Once he brought back a young dog, which he gave to Adam. Adam named it Ring, because the hair around one of its eyes was black and the rest of its body was white.

One night when they were drunk and fighting Marie hit Mace with a poker after he had struck her with his fist and knocked her down. She hit him from behind and he was too drunk to know what had struck him. Adam had left the house when the fight had started, but he had seen the blow struck from the door. Later, Marie told Mace an iron skillet had fallen from a hook and struck him. Adam said nothing about what he had seen.

But the horrible thought of the fight lingered in his mind. What if his mother became angry at him and struck him on the head with a poker?

Marie, at first, thought she had killed Mace, and summoned the sheriff and the doctor from town. She told them about the skillet falling. But Mace wasn't dead. The

doctor took him to his home in Carlinville, for there were no hospitals in the river country.

"He'll need good care and constant attention," said the doctor. "He should be where I can get to him quickly."

Mace lay in a bed in the doctor's house for three weeks. One day Adam went with his mother to see him. They rowed up the river and left their boat south of the town. Marie did not want to walk through the streets.

"They'll be talk enough," she said.

They set out on a road running through a woodland at the edge of the town. The doctor's house stood at the end of the road on a hill. On their way they stopped in the woods to rest. They sat on a fallen log. Marie was trembling. Adam took her hand. It was cold and damp. He wanted to say something, but he seemed to have forgotten the few words he knew.

Mace lay in a narrow bed, still and white. His head was wrapped in bandages. Adam was amazed at the clean appearance of his father and of the room. Both looked as if they had been thoroughly scrubbed. Even the tan on his father's face had been washed off.

There was a strange smell in the room which made Adam feel ill. He stood at the doorway fearing to go farther. His mother sat on a chair beside Mace's bed looking down at his face. Presently she got up. Mace was sleeping, a woman told them. He must not be awakened. They went out, back down the hill and through the woods. When they got out in the boat Marie began to cry. Adam rowed methodically and said nothing.

Mace came home and sat about in the sunshine for several weeks. Finally he began to fish, to stir here and there. He seemed to have become more silent than ever, more lost in thought. He scarcely made a sound about the shanty. One had to see him to know he was nearby.

Winter came, and with it a new peace. The peace lasted through the cold months. Mace and Marie continued to get tipsy together, but there were no angry words spoken. She seemed to have forgotten about nagging at him when she wished him to do something he did not care to do. And he

made no effort to command her. Adam, considering the situation, came to understand his father's attitude better than that of his mother. He thought his father somewhat afraid of Marie. And Marie had a secret which he, unknown to her, was sharing with her. The fact tended to bring him closer to Mace in feeling, as two people are brought closer to each other by mutual understanding.

He came to know Mace, to understand him, for the first time in his life, and with something of the manner in which he had learned to understand Ring. Neither of them spoke; and to know them one was simply obliged to pay close attention to their actions, their habits, their methods, their expressions.

He acquired, however, little true understanding of his mother. After the fight he had become afraid of her. A gap had been created between them which he was unable to bridge. And she seemed to sense it, but made no effort to fill it.

She was obviously not one to be ordered about. And her moods changed as light and shadow on a day when there were drifting clouds in the sky. Her secret, however, served to keep her less talkative than she had been before the fight. The reason was clear, even to Adam. Her drunken tongue might give her away, or her conscience cause her to reveal the truth of the blow during a spell of liquor-inspired sentimentality.

There was a bit of proudness in her easily discernible. It had often angered Mace. Her people at one time had owned a large tract of land in central Illinois. She had been taught to read and write, and for a time had attended a school. Perhaps, Mace was a little envious of what he termed her "grand manner," which she had not lost even though she had lived in poverty since her marriage. She taught Adam the alphabet, to write simple words and sat with him while he struggled to read from old newspapers which sometimes found their way into the shanty.

In the spring Mace went to Carlinville with skins, and did not return for three days. When he came home he was drunk. His skiff was filled with provisions and a keg of whiskey. Marie scolded him for spend-

ing so much money. In the evening, she tapped the keg and got tipsy. She kept on scolding him. Mace walked about the shanty with his eyes on the floor. He wavered unsteadily back and forth across the kitchen. Suddenly he turned on her. She threw a cup of whiskey at him.

Her anger got the better of her. Mace threatened to leave, to go back to town. Then she laughed, and attempted to strike him with a broom, to drive him from the shanty. They began to struggle and knocked over a table. Dishes clattered to the floor. Then the shanty was silent. Adam, sitting outside under a tree, could hear the river ripples lapping the shore.

The silence was shattered by the sharp report of his father's pistol. Mace screamed. He fell against the stove, overturning it. Smoke began to roll out of the shanty door. Marie collapsed, clutching the pistol.

Jesse Lunce got Marie's body out of the fire. When he attempted to re-enter the house a wall of flame and smoke rose up before him and he staggered back, his hands to his face. The flames lighted up the bar. People from other shanties came with buckets and dipped water from the river, dashing it against the walls of fire, but their efforts were futile.

Mace was cremated. Marie was suffocated.

The neighbors dragged Mace out of the ashes with fish hooks. They poked around with long poles stirring up live coals and throwing water on them. It was dawn when they departed. A lone upright stood against the pale light of the eastern sky as if to mark the spot.

The sun lifted the mists from the river, rolling them as gold gauze off the water, revealing the beauty of the countryside and the spring foliage. Adam sat beneath a tree on the bank looking off across the bright water.

These were his earliest memories. I left him with a feeling of profound sadness. And on my way home I stopped in a speak-easy and sat alone drinking wine. It wasn't what I had wanted. I hadn't wanted him to begin like that. God knows, if I had suspected that he was inclined to fictionize his stories, I knew now he was telling me the

truth. And I wondered if he had ever told anyone else.

I did not want to go back to the Valley of Singing again, though I realized that undoubtedly he would take me. He would finish it now. There would be no reason for withholding what was left.

* * *

Something caused him to build about himself a wall of reserve after he had come to Santa Fe, and because he admitted this to me I drew the conclusion that he realized the safety in silence. He was not yet, as records go, a full-fledged outlaw, but there were a few matters in his past better dead. Not entirely from him, you must understand, have I constructed my picture of him in those early days.

He and Omar lived in a Mexican house in the Galesteo Road. The house still stands, little changed by the years. It has a large patio in which bright flowers bloom among transplanted cactus. The door leading into the two rooms they occupied is visible from the street through a narrow arched passageway.

Adam sat before his door alone a great deal, appearing to be lost in the contemplation of the world about him, more like a statue than a living man, seeming cold and unfriendly. I could believe this, and that it was the same way in which he walked through the narrow streets of the town, for he had not lost his attitude entirely when I knew him. He still appeared ready to withdraw, watchful and suspicious, when approached.

It was apparent that only Palo could break through the invisible shell. And certainly no woman, for he seemed not to know that women were on earth, with the exception of Magdalena Chaves, his landlord's daughter, with whom he sat sometimes in the late afternoon before his door.

Magdalena was a pretty girl of fifteen, slender, with a pointed olive face. There was nothing especially significant, however, in that they were seen sitting together in the shadow of the patio. It was her home, and she might have sat there with any man who came there to live. I, of course, looked for developments when he told me about her. It would indeed be a strange story if she

did not play a more important role. But he said no more about her then.

He would walk some afternoons along the *acequia madre* running from the canyon of the Rio Santa Fe. I imagined him resting in the shade of a locust tree, sitting motionless as if he were listening to the water or a bird song. The realization came to me that he must have been a rather mysterious figure, a strange little dark man remaining on the circumference of the circle of life about him and only going within occasionally, but always maintaining his quiet manner, his reserve. And I wondered what he could have been thinking about. Wishing? Dreaming? Longing? Scheming? Regretting?

In the *acequia* Mexican children bathed; naked, copper children splashed and soaped themselves . . . the *acequia* was only briefly disturbed. Children came and went like days. The *acequia* had gone on its way for centuries . . . steadily . . . watering the fields of the little brown people, the thirsty red and yellow and purple flowers . . . singing its way into the desert. The *acequia* went on unhampered by the troubled thoughts of men, singing through the city in the sunlight, in the moonlight, born of the Blood of Christ Mountains, the Sangre de Cristo, seeking its eternal work with un-failing strength and song.

Sometimes on these afternoon excursions he would ride a horse, following a trail up the canyon of the Rio Santa Fe. The mountains rose up before him in a great emerald wall with golden tints lighting the high prominent points and blue shadows lying in the canyons. The sun hung above a cloud of purple mist in the west, which was the Jemez Range, almost constantly swept by great blue brooms which were rain storms. The Jemez lay beyond the valley of the Rio Grande, the river running from the sky through a valley changing constantly under moving heat waves like a chameleon its shades and colors. Southward was a colored patch-work of desert running down to the distant round blue peaks of the Sandia standing before a pale blue sky.

Several miles up Santa Fe canyon he would turn to the south into a narrower canyon. The trail dwindled as it ascended

until it was no more than an occasional old hoof print made by some Mexican's burro. The trees became thick and majestic. The afternoon sun gleamed on the high eastern peaks, showering gold over the green forests of pine and the paler patches of quaking aspen.

He must have ridden with only the creaking of saddle leather disturbing the intense stillness. When he had come to a level table land between two black walls, he would turn sharply to the right and climb a steep trail through a heavy forest, and come out on a high point. Directly below him, Santa Fe was a tiny patch of colored squares on the yellow desert floor. A green spot in the north marked Tesuque, and far beyond were the mountains of Taos, a blue background in the great panorama. He would see wagons on the trail to Anuburque, tiny specks crawling toward Mesa La Bajada.

* * *

There were days when I would not see him, and times when I would look for him and could not find him. It was if he had vanished from the city. And these instances carried me into a state of apprehension. He was not in his room; he was not in the plaza; he was not in the Palace of the Governors. (Sometimes he would go there and nose around among the myriad relics.) There were two speakeasies which he occasionally visited, mostly for the purpose of playing rummy. He preferred to drink his own whiskey, it seemed. Where he concealed himself at these odd times I never knew.

Then one afternoon I found him by the Rio Santa Fe more than three miles from the plaza. He was sitting under a pine looking off up the canyon. I don't know how he got out there. No doubt he rode up in someone's car. We spent several hours there.

The creek was far below us. Behind us the forest ran up the steep mountain side out of which rangers had cut the roadway. The tips of the high peaks were visible above the end of the canyon, sharp white diamonds in the blue sky. It might have been the Mississippi River. We might have been sitting on a Missouri bluff. The pines oaks. The peaks white clouds. (I did not

know why he chose to tell me of the east today and the west tomorrow.)

One day he came home from Carlinville with a present for Mary. He had gone to town with skins, and with some of the money he got for them he bought her some dress goods. But he was too bashful to give it to her. He kept it hidden for a week. Then one day he laid it on a table in the kitchen when no one was about and went out. He remained away until late in the evening, until he was certain everyone would be sleeping. But when he came in he found her waiting up for him.

He lost some of his bashfulness after this, and it was not so difficult for him to reveal his intentions. He experienced little opposition. Jesse and Ophelia sanctioned the romance and said nothing. Mary was an enthusiastic participant. She and he had lived in the same house for years, but suddenly he had changed in his attitude toward her. They went walking or rowing on summer evenings, now conscious of each other, speaking, looking at each other differently. That winter she trudged by his side as he tended his trap lines. He tanned skins for her and she made a coat and cap and mittens. He put new soles on her shoes, relieving Jesse of the task. And she made shirts for him, knitted him socks, a woolen vest and wristlets. There was nothing more to be done or said. They belonged to each other.

He had developed a fine voice and he and Jesse continued to sing together. It seemed to be an unbreakable bond between them, withstanding the forces which might have caused them to drift apart. They took trips together, going far into the woods where they heard strange bird songs, saw strange trees and flowers. Jesse imitated the bird calls. Sitting in the still woods, he would whistle until an answer came. Then his face would light and his hand would tremble with excitement. In the fall and spring they hunted ducks; in the winter they hunted wolves and trapped; in summer they fished.

He told me something about Mary I did not understand. But, then, he told me several things I did not understand, for at times he talked incoherently and I only caught a word now and then. It was as if

his thoughts came jerkily to his mind and his words reflecting them were affected by their unsteadiness.

He often visioned himself with Mary, living together in their own house . . . He was leaving the house in the misty dawn to tend his set lines in the river . . . She stood in the doorway watching him . . . In both winter and summer pictures in his mind, he saw her standing in the door of their home . . . He was setting out in his furs to follow his trap lines across the frozen swamps . . . She watched him disappear into the woods carrying his rifle. When he had gained the trees, he turned and looked back. She was still standing in the door looking toward him . . . Always she seemed to be watching him from the doorway . . .

Looking over his story that evening, I made an attempt to piece together the fragments, to find places for the odd ends and so to make it complete as far as he had gone. At last I gave up. It was futile. One unfinished end defied me boldly. It was the fact that he had left the Valley of Singing and had never returned!

But he had gone back with me! Was it that now, after all these years, he wanted to return to those far scenes which held little else but tragic memories? Little else? Perhaps there was a great deal more. I had reason to suspect there was now. He and Mary had made their plans. Suddenly I thought of the Civil War! The war took him away, and when it ended he had no wish to return to the river life. He had learned something of the world outside. He had forgotten her; or he had found some one else. I was disappointed. Was this after all going to turn into the story of a man whose life was changed drastically by war? Spare me, I hoped.

He talked the first time about the war several days later, saying little about particulars, and speaking in a manner which led me to believe he thought me bored. If I am to be truthful I must admit I was. War stories interested me not at all, for I was not interested in war. But I wanted to know why he was in St. Louis when the great conflict began; why he enlisted in the

Confederate cavalry instead of joining the Union forces.

He must have been a small, brown-faced soldier, with sharp black eyes, his body hardened to uncomfortable saddles, beaten to hardness by cold and heat, by rain and snow, by hunger and hardship. The river lay far behind him; in his mind much farther from him than in actual miles, for he had gone into another world.

He asked himself what life was, a single life or a thousand. Each day before his eyes they were ended violently, snuffed out and quickly forgotten. The world went on. The hordes advanced or retreated, swimming in blood. Day by day the men about him became more skilful in the practice of killing and torturing others and more careless of their own lives, more adventurous, more reckless. They went on crying for victory, spurred by loyalty in the beginning, by bitterness and determination later.

I was bored. All wars were the same. All soldiers were the same. Consider them in any light: the same forces carried men into battle. The reasons were the same basically and there was nothing else to them.

He was a cavalryman for three years, when he became a lieutenant. There were few of the original members of his company left to serve under him.

Then his war story took on a different aspect. I was no longer weary of it.

At dusk one day a detachment from another regiment rode into his camp. He watched the men pass along the street from his tent. One of them was Jesse Lunce.

The old river man had grown a beard. He was gaunt and looked very weary and worn, bent to his saddle. The strain of war was reflected in him.

Fires were lighted and when it grew dark the men grouped about them. Then came the singing, old Jesse leading the men in a song of the cavalry.

Suddenly he told me he deserted. That night he rode out of camp alone. Several miles away he came to a stream. He dressed in civilian clothes, weighting his uniform with rocks and throwing it into the water.

He must have understood that I wanted to know the reason, for he seemed troubled.

We were sitting in the patio of the Mason house, and without warning he got up and left me, going into his room.

I remained. The shadows lengthened. Gold splashed along the wall opposite me, and purple shadows lurked beneath the balcony. Presently he came out again, and when he sat down I smelled whiskey. He had not run away from his memories! He had only gone to get a drink!

It was dark when I left the patio. He was still in his chair. I am not sure he had not fallen asleep. I ate my supper hurriedly in a "quick" restaurant whose glaring front besmirched nightly the shadowed beauty of the plaza, and I wrote far into the night.

Now he had deserted the cavalry. In the service he had grown older. He had become an extremely quiet and reserved little man, calm and seemingly fearless. In those years he had seen himself alone at the end of the world, on the brink of time. He knew life well, knew its eternity and its uncertainty, unscathed himself but only waiting for the next moment to die.

He crossed the river one night, hardly looking at it. And then he put it behind him forever. Before him was a new country, another world he had never seen, and this meant new and strange adventures. He found himself going forward eagerly, for now his life was made up of searches for new adventures. There was nothing else. He, too, was filled with the restlessness of soldiers who have known battle, who cannot quiet themselves with peace, but who want to go on in the careless, fearless manner in which they fought. Peace has no charm for them. Peace is discontentment.

Then there was the frontier, and he began to find solace in its atmosphere, its possibilities, its activities. In the small settlements sprouted like ugly warts on the windswept plains and burning deserts, he met men from far countries, quiet, brown-faced men who rode better than they walked. He gambled and was lucky. He drank raw liquors and was lifted. He lingered with dancing señoritas, stirred by dark eyes, graceful bodies, Spanish music, languorous nights, and he was awakened.

And sometimes he forgot to look back.

Sometimes he was relieved of remembering—what? The unpleasant memories of his life as a boy in his own home? Jesse Lunce and the singing? Mary and romance? The war and his desertion? No. There was something else far worse. There was something which had changed his life suddenly and sent him out into the world an unattached individual apparently incapable of being attached.

The war was little more than a helper, continuing the life of the restlessness born of another cause. But it was the war, he told me, which gave him the courage he needed to escape a miserable existence. And I was properly astounded to learn that he had left the Lunce home nearly two years before the war began.

It was another gap in a story already filled with gaps. But gradually he bridged it; only, however, after he had made certain I understood that the war had saved his life, had brought to him the freedom he most needed.

For during those long months directly preceding his enlistment he was rather a miserable creature. After leaving the Lunce house he had gone to work on the river steamers, up-and downstream between New Orleans and St. Louis. Once he had got a job on a steamer plying between Burlington and St. Louis, but he left it a few minutes before it sailed north, and went back south again. At times he would ask himself why he did not leave the river, go off inland to some other state, but he found no answer to the question. Only more questions—where would he go? What would he do away from the river? The river held him; he knew no other life, no other work.

A great hate, however, had grown up in him for it. He saw no beauty in its shades and colors, took no heed of the hills and forests through which it flowed. It had become a drab thing in his eyes, without attraction, without interest, awaking no admiration in him as it had done before he had run away—when he was singing it, crooning its life with Jesse.

He found solace for his wretchedness, however, in the cities and towns he visited, in their liquors and their women. Whiskey caused him to forget his misery; and he

would often spend an evening in a waterfront saloon in New Orleans, Memphis, St. Louis, hanging over a bar, surrounded by the rough men into whose world he had wandered. Association with loose women was a new experience for him. He had not known the saloon women in Carlinville; and the fact that he could have any of these girls in the river towns for a piece of silver was at first fascinating and tempting. But the novelty of this soon wore off. The whiskey was his true friend. It was the whiskey which carried him out of a dreary world into a world of delight and fancy.

Now the sun was gone. The gold had vanished from the patio wall, leaving only the purple shadow. I did not look at him, for I was afraid he would think me anxious, eager. And I was, almost to an uncontrollable degree. It was coming now, the part which was the basis for all that was to follow, for all that I had heard. But he was so calm, so deliberate, thinking and talking, telling me his story with so many interruptions of complete silence.

Sam Lunce was larger than Adam. The two were poor companions. Sam was secretly jealous because Adam sang with his father. He tried at times to dominate Adam, to order him about, but Adam only laughed at him. Sam's fat face would become sullen, and a look of hate would creep into his eyes.

One afternoon they were fishing in the main river. They had set up their lines in a deep channel which swung in against the west bank north of the bar.

Presently Adam hooked a large catfish. It was a monster, weaving around in the water. After he had got it out on the bank, he struck it on the head with a heavy club.

Sam was angered at Adam's good fortune. He said nothing, however, sitting on the bank, his face clouded, tending his lines in silence.

When dusk fell they prepared to go home. "I'll carry the big fish for you," said Sam. "You've got enough without it."

Adam laughed. He understood the thought in Sam's mind. When they got home, Sam would say he had caught the big fish. He would make him out to be a liar.

The Frontier

"You carry your fish," he said. "I'll carry the ones I caught."

Sam's face grew red. "I've a good mind to whip you and take it away from you . . ."

"If you can," Adam retorted.

Sam rushed at him, and they began to fight fiercely. At last, Adam knocked Sam down. He lay on the ground, his mouth bleeding. Suddenly he jumped up. In one hand he held a large fish knife. He advanced slowly, and Adam backed away from him.

He walked around Adam, who kept turning to face him. There was a glint in Sam's eyes which made him think of the eyes of the big catfish. His foot struck against something hard. It was the club with which he had killed the fish. He bent quickly and picked it up. Sam sprang at him, and he jumped aside, evading a vicious thrust of the knife. He swung the club and brought it down on Sam's head. Sam staggered backward. The knife fell from his hand, and he toppled from the bank into the water.

The river moved on smoothly. Twigs floated by. Adam sank down to the ground. A profound stillness seemed to have settled over the earth and the water, as if the wind, the leaves, the grasses were waiting breathlessly to see if Sam rose to the surface. Adam lay full length at the edge of the bank, his eyes fastened on the unrippled river.

Dusk fell. He got up and started to walk along the bank toward Carlinville. A dog whined, and he was so startled he fell to his knees. Ring had found him.

It took him most of the evening to reach Carlinville. He walked along a deserted street, keeping in shadow. He could see lights ahead, the lights of saloons along the levee. Ring kept at his heels, ears dropped, acting strangely because of the smells of town dogs. A man came out of a side street and Ring growled. The man was drunk and paid no attention to them.

When he had come to the levee, he sat down between two crates. Lights flickered across the river on the Illinois side. He saw the red flare of a locomotive fire box shoot skyward and vanish as the fire door was opened and closed. The dim coach lights flickered as the train passed in and out

among the trees. Ring came close and put his head in Adam's lap.

A steamer was loading. He could see negroes passing back and forth on the gangways in the unsteady glare of torches. The negroes looked like black ghosts, elongated and misshapen in the faltering lights. The river lapped on the levee. Bits of negro songs, bits of voices drifted down to him from the steamer. A negro girl laughed. A derrick block creaked dismally. A pile of boxes fell over, and a man cursed—then stillness, the stillness which had come after he had hit Sam on the head with the club and watched him sink beneath the water. He was out there now . . . some place . . . rolling downstream like a log . . . over and over.

He walked to the end of the levee, and stood looking out across the river flickering with the lights of stars. Then he reached down and touched Ring on the head.

"Go home," he said.

It was difficult for him to get aboard the steamer without being seen. He concealed himself in the cargo, stretching full length on the deck. Lying there, weary, his body aching, he fell asleep. When he awoke the steamer was moving. He had been so completely exhausted that he had slept through the noise of the departure. He had not even heard the whistle blasts.

He soon fell asleep again. When he awoke the second time, the sun had risen. He crept toward the edge of the deck. The steamer was less than a quarter of a mile from shore. He made his way aft, walking boldly past several negroes, climbed a companion ladder to the upper deck and walked to the rail. He stood there for only a minute, then sprang as far from the steamer as he could. The wake drew him under, released him and he felt himself in calm water. He struck out for the bank.

* * *

Progress had been slow, but I felt now we would go ahead rapidly. There could be, I told myself, no more profound secret of his than the one he had revealed. And I felt, not without some pride, that I was the first to hear it. Perhaps he had told Magdalena or Palo. I did not think so. He was not

one to confide even with those who were close to him.

He spoke of Magdalena again, and I was not surprised, for I had expected him to mention her soon.

Manuel and Christina, her father and mother, he knew suspected their daughter of having an affair with him. Neither made mention of their suspicions, however, for each fervently hoped they were true. They prayed that Adam would marry Magdalena, for a girl's position was raised considerably when she married an American.

And Magdalena's position needed raising. She had revealed a strain of impropriety which threatened her future. Prostitution was not an entirely degrading vocation if followed only semi-professionally, but one which caused trouble and tragedy. Hence, it was a thing to be avoided if possible.

Manuel and Christina saw a hope in Adam, but his private attitude was to the contrary. He liked Magdalena because she was lively, because she was pretty, quick and clever. But his admiration ended there. He had no desire to enter into any marital bargains nor assume any domestic responsibilities.

When he arrived, Magdalena was being courted by two worthy young Mexicans. Secretly she had promised herself, and indeed given herself, to both of them. Neither of the young men suspected her of being unfaithful and each considered himself victorious in his conquest. She had conducted the affairs with remarkable cleverness, managing to see each alone often enough to allay any suspicions which might have arisen in their minds, as well as keeping both interested. She was receiving gifts from each of them, and thoroughly enjoying the game. The climax came one evening when one of the young men, disobeying her orders, came unexpectedly to the house and discovered her on the portal in a somewhat compromising position with his rival.

The two suitors stood in the patio threatening each other with death, shouting until they had aroused every one in the vicinity. Magdalena, seeking to save something from the wreckage, calmed them temporarily by suggesting that they fight for her like men and not wrangle like old women. She urged them to violence, offering herself as the

victor's reward. But at this moment Manuel emerged from the house and upon hearing the facts of the case, took her inside and gave her a sound thrashing. Neither of the suitors ever returned.

Magdalena's apparent interest in Adam encouraged Manuel and Christina after the triangle episode had destroyed the hope that their daughter would do well in life. But they saw also that Adam reacted unfavorably to her attentions. So they despaired in one moment and took heart in the next.

Adam chanced to pass their door one evening and overheard them urging Magdalena to force her hand. He stood in the darkness just outside listening.

"An American gambler is not to be sneezed at," said Christina.

"Even to be the lover of such a man may be fortunate," Manuel told her.

"Perhaps I am," she answered saucily. "And wouldn't people like to know!"

* * *

It was at this time that I found myself lost, at sea, for I had no idea of what to expect from him. Still I felt that something tremendous was coming. He had taken me from the Valley of Singing, from the river days, from the war, from early west Texas, to the aged city in the high country.

Looking backward upon that part of his life of which he had told me, at the incidents and events he had disclosed, I was wont to wonder about the philosophy of such a man. There had been only brief moments, so to speak, of happiness, few times when he had been lifted above the drabness of his existence. Tragedy had played a major role, and his boyhood had been filled with terrifying scenes which must have remained ever horrible in his memory. It is this fact which led me to conclude that his restlessness was due to his efforts to forget! Yet he must have realized the futility of such a task. He could never forget. He could never escape.

How, then, did these things affect his mental processes? What did they do to him beside send him off into the world aimlessly, striving to leave himself behind? It was no wonder to me now that he built a shell around himself. It was not remarkable that he was silent, cold, unfriendly. He must

have been driven on by a bitterness, a regret, a longing, which made him a reckless, dangerous man. His memories must have been maddening! And all the time he was trying to forget, trying not to look back!

If he imperiled his life would it not have helped him? If he walked into danger would not the problem of the moment have dominated his thoughts? I think this is true. And this conclusion gave emphasis to the expectation in my own mind of something tremendous to come.

Did he seek danger, imperil his life?

The two men, Adam and Omar, were in Santa Fe. The days were slipping away. This in itself is hardly worth mention. The passing of days means nothing to Santa Fe. They have gone their way unnoticed, rising from the mountains east in a blaze of coral and golden light, and falling in copper splendor behind the Jemez in the west, for centuries. Time meant more to the two men. While the old city dreamed and ignored the suns and the moons, they were thinking, scheming.

One afternoon he was walking in the church gardens. He told me they were very beautiful gardens. I told myself they still were very beautiful. Then they were a paradise in the midst of a blooming desert. But, too, all the country about them was beautiful. They were merely a concentration point. Outside their walls nature had created in her own way, on a large, loose and rugged scale.

He followed a path from a gate which ran in a semi-circle through an orchard. When he came to a group of young poplars he sat down on the ground. Several yards beyond the trees was a low adobe wall. The slanting rays of the sun tinted the leaves a bright lettuce-green, touched their tips with gold. Redbirds and juncoes flitted in the fruit trees.

He heard a woman laugh, and looking up he saw Omar and a nun walking on the other side of the wall. They passed from sight without seeing him.

He went on along the path until he came to where it joined another leading directly to the church. At the intersection he sat down on a wooden seat. An ill-founded feeling of guilt had risen in him, as if he had

been spying, and it confused him. But presently he decided he was only surprised. Omar and a nun! It was inconceivable! And he sat there troubled, puzzled, wondering at the man's motive.

The sun fell behind the Jemez, and shadows deepened in the garden. A bell tolled. He heard some one approaching and was startled by the appearance of the nun with whom he had seen Omar. She passed him hurriedly, going toward the church, casting only a furtive glance at him. He saw that she was slender. Her features were delicate and pale under her white hood.

He continued to sit on the bench after she had gone. Soon Omar came along the path, frowned when he saw him, and asked with poorly concealed suspicion:

"Why are you here?"

He had anticipated the question. "Did you think I was here to spy?" he replied.

Omar sat down slowly beside him and lit a cigar. "No. I don't think you would."

"As a matter of fact, I often walk in here," he explained. "But I never saw you before."

"It don't matter," the Texas Swede said quietly. "I met her in here one day about a month ago."

He smiled. "You talk as if you were the sinner."

"Maybe I am. She says it's wrong. But I don't look at things that way. I reckon she's the bad one."

"And you are the good one."

The Swede snorted, shook his massive shoulders. He looked directly into Adam's face. "She hates it. She hates everything it stands for. She's broke every vow she took. Now she wants to get out, run off. Do you know what that means?"

"Yes," he said. "I do."

How well he knew. Escape? Hate? If any one understood their meaning, he did.

Omar went on. "She's bad. But she can't help herself. The church don't mean anything to her. She don't belong among good people. She knows she ought to get out and leave them to themselves."

There was a prolonged silence.

"Well?" said Adam.

"I'm going to take her out of it," Omar

answered with finality. "I know what you're thinking."

"Wouldn't you expect me to think it?"

He told me he was thinking about their plans and wondering if she would interfere with them.

"She won't interfere," Omar told him.

Then he sent me away and I had to wait to hear the plans. I speculated, of course, and with great enthusiasm. Plans meant adventure, I told myself. And the nun meant romance, probably a harsh, crude kind flavored with bitterness and remorse.

The next time I saw him he was tipsy, so I did not talk with him. Once in a while he did drink a little too much. It was somewhat harrowing to see a man of his age under the weather. He would go shouting along the street on his way home. Men would follow him, perhaps a pair of his old cronies, to see that he reached his room safely. There was danger from automobiles now, a danger as bad as killers' guns, bad horses and officers of the law, which once he had been obliged to recognize.

He bothered no one at such a time. He would stumble along the street making a disturbance with his swearing and growling. Children scurried for their own doorsteps and stood ready to leap inside should he approach them. People got out of his way, stood aside to let him pass, and did not laugh, but watched with sober faces until he had gone by. He was not a person to laugh at. There was something grim and foreboding in his drawn face, the distant look in his tiny black eyes framed in the white beard, which kept people from snickering at him.

He was the old bad man, the old outlaw, and the legends of the country clung to his name, the legends of the far lands still mysterious, still blue beyond the reaches of the Rio Grande.

A few days later came that weird session during which at times I thought his mind had failed him, and at other times I was completely astounded by the poetic beauty of his words. He was aggravatingly incoherent, mumbling and whispering, talking as if to his thoughts, as one asleep.

He and Omar were on the verge of launching some scheme. There was no doubt it

would make a great change in his life. It was to be a drastic step. Now as he recalled those hours preceding it, strange thoughts must have come to his mind. Perhaps he did wander a bit. Perhaps he was somewhat confused. A multitude of memories, minor recollections, came with a rush, pursued by a regiment of ghosts, sturdy, unrelenting ghosts. Bedlam ensued. He mumbled and whispered.

In the evening by the gate to the patio of the old house in Galesteo Road Magdalena stopped him, laying a hand gently on his arm. She seemed to be filled with a great fear. I wondered if she knew the plans.

"Do not go to gamble tonight, *senor*," she pleaded. "Do not go away. Walk with me first."

He stared into her midnight eyes, searched her pointed olive face and saw fright there which she was attempting to conceal. Her voice was as soft as a child's. Then he saw hope in her look. The fright vanished. Her voice became musical again, and a light as if coming from the stars struck her eyes.

They walked slowly out along the dark road, and beyond the town they climbed a hill. Once she took his arm but it stiffened and she moved a step away from him and did not touch him again.

They sat in the star-shadows of a pinon tree, looking down upon the walls of the city. Then the moon rose, a great round ball rolling over the peaks. The walls became soft and curved. The lines of the earth became gentle. The great mountains appeared strangely small, dwarfed by the immensity of the moonlit space above them.

Then he seemed to have lost track of his story, and he stared at the stone floor of the patio. I waited, afraid to look at him. I had no illusions about him then or later. I saw him as he really was, a hardened old desert man, having known much of the worst of life and little of the best. And upon my honor, I felt only very mild sympathy for him, but I admired him without limit. I could not fool myself into thinking he had a gentle side. No. He was only sincere . . . and tremendously unfortunate. If there was poetry, romance in him, I failed to find it. I would not say to the satisfaction of

sentimentalists, that he was only human. Better that he was flesh and blood, and that he could reason without emotion, so a man of extraordinary ability. He was not human as we use the word. He could understand! And if that analysis would not be considered logical, sound, then I would be trite and say that even an old desert dog had his moments.

He did not intend to take me back to the Valley of Singing again, I was certain. Yet, there he was walking in a cornfield with Mary Lunce. But I did not believe he could help himself. He had lost control temporarily . . . mumbling and whispering . . . I only half understood him.

He and Mary were sitting in the shadow of a tall shock . . . she began to cry softly . . . presently she got up and went behind the shock and took off her clothes . . . he could hear her crying . . . trying to understand her strange actions . . . a full harvest moon tinted the dry stalks golden between rustling shadows . . . the yellow arm of a beam reached down on every shock . . . a thousand beams on the dry leaves which whispered a song of a world beyond . . . a soundless melody he felt creeping, note after note, over him . . . where she danced in a shock row, a shadow image danced, mocking her in dark perfection . . . the moonlight was corn dust falling from the land of eternal harvest, dusting her with moon-fingers to make her golden . . . the moon music lured him off into a vast nothingness . . . he felt himself floating beyond the edge of the earth, beyond the brink of time, even the stars and the moonlight . . . he was among the echoes of the moon music, completely detached from all contact with the world of life, suspended in fathomless space . . . she stopped dancing and stood close to him, looking up, her breast rising and falling rapidly . . . he reached out toward her, and she touched his hand with trembling fingers, sprang away from him like a moon deer, flitted away like a moon bird, and was hidden by the spectral shocks . . . the music burst upon him with a noiseless blare of brasses . . . he felt his flesh carressed with the rhythm of a thousand harmonious measures causing him to draw deeply into him the breath of a

thousand wind instruments he could not hear madly playing an autumn symphony.

I wanted to leave, go away from him now. It seemed to me something terrible was happening within him. But I dared not move. I listened again, trying to weave from his wandering words a semblance of a pattern. And catching up to him again I found them walking in a moonlit road beside the Mississippi. Then he was alone there beside the water. She had gone into the house, leaving him on the bank, the corn dust showering down through the dark trees.

What shall a man say to the urge that bursts his breast and pains his hands, and sends him forth, he knows not where, nor where the end? . . . he was born of the valley . . . he knew the valley's song . . . he knew the touch of valley fingers . . . he was a worker of the valley . . . and as he sat there beside the still moonlit river, his young muscles strained again to tasks in burning summer heat, in the blue and green days of spring, in the bitterness of white winter . . . over valley roads his feet had trodden eagerly . . . his eyes had seen earthly gestures . . . he had heard the vegetation in the language of the blade and of the leaf . . . the rhythm of the hills had moved his blood in rhythmic flow . . . his heart had risen on the wind . . . the earth and its waters at morn had sighed to his hands, had sighed at dusk . . . toil had awakened him to new life as the soil is awakened by the spring . . . toil had awakened him to new thought . . . he dreamed, he wondered at every song, every sound . . . and he heard singing, constant voices far from him . . . there was no end . . . toiling he had turned toward the sky, and he had turned back again . . . he had turned back each thought, each hour, its strength, its length . . . never gaining . . . Christ! let him go on! . . . on over the hills . . . on and into the sky . . . What shall a man say? . . . why, he shall go on, over the hills, on and into the sky . . . why, he shall listen to his heart, to the moon music, the star whisperings . . . why, he shall dream . . . until he has come back to his beginning . . . for the years are never turning and the road is straight as wind blows . . .

Then I heard Magdalena's name. It came from his beard almost as a whisper. It was she . . . now! I had forgot they were together on the hill looking down upon the walls of the old city softly curved in the desert moonlight. (If you are sympathetic you will understand that I, too, was lost.)

She was standing before him, her arms uplifted toward the moon, her slender face upturned to catch the full light . . . and there was music again, the music of a thousand wind instruments madly playing their only symphony . . .

But suddenly he had left her and was hurrying down the hill toward the city, leaving her standing on the brink, a dark image carved out of moonlight.

* * *

In all the time he had talked to me, a period of months now, I had not considered him in the light of an outlaw. His story did not seem to be an outlaw's story, rather only episodes of a tragic life.

But now the promise of action his plans gave caused me to look upon him in a different manner. So I began to expect him to reverse the direction of his tale, so to speak, to perform feats of his own creation. He would no longer be the victim. He would be the aggressor. And this feeling gave him a strange aspect, a man capable of shaping his own destiny to the extent every free person is able. He was to invite, not only receive.

The moon out of which Magdalena had carved herself dwindled until it was no more than a curved golden hair. And on this night two men and a woman rode through a narrow street toward the plaza. When they reached it they stopped and looked about them. The heart of the city was deserted. One light was visible, coming from the door of the Trail House, a place never deserted.

The two men dismounted when they came close to the light and the woman held their horses. Just outside the door they adjusted handkerchiefs over their faces. The large man carried a shotgun, the smaller man a pistol.

As they stepped inside the small man sent a ball into the ceiling.

"Reach up your hands!" he shouted. Waving the pistol he sent men and women away from the bar and the tables, forcing them to the opposite wall.

The man with the shotgun addressed an attendant who stood with his hands above his head behind the bar.

"The money the traders left here. Quick!"

The barkeeper, a Mexican, shook his head. "There is none."

The man raised the shotgun.

"I'll get it! Don't shoot!" another attendant cried. He sprang forward and from beneath the bar produced three leather pouches. The little man backed to get them while the man with the shotgun menaced the crowd. Step by step the two backed toward the door. The little man, carrying the money, backed out first. The large man raised the shotgun. When he heard a shrill whistle he fired at a lamp, sending it crashing to the floor, spreading flame. Then he vanished.

These were the plans of which he had spoken to me. They had been carried out without a hitch. There was more to them, of course, than he told me. I heard only the results. But Omar had kept his promise. He had taken Nina the nun (I only learned her name here) out of the life she despised. I didn't think it was such a difficult task. She was a willing deserter. The Texas Swede was a means of escape. I had a feeling she had used him, and I did not like her. Suddenly she stopped serving God, and served the devil. She might have used more discretion. But perhaps I was previous in my criticism. I did not know what was coming, and no doubt I should have considered more the nature of her act. It was nothing less than a vital step. I did not understand her emotions. The only fact clear in my mind was that she was not suited to service as a nun. She was not given to God of her own will, and she had no desire to be given to Him.

I found them again far from Santa Fe.

Out of a rolling waste of red and yellow desert the Jemez Mountains raise a great jumbled mass of blue peaks to an unblemished sky. The weathered crags, the scarred walls of box-like mesas, the convex uplifts and heavily timbered slopes, tormented and

abrupt, majestic and far-flung, stand indistinct and with vague features in the coral mist and blue haze of the early dawn.

Westward from their base the sands reach to a far horizon. Over them the night withdrawing before the advance of the bright sun retreated swiftly, and the conical junipers, the ragged sage and cactus took shape, seeming to leap from under the veil of paling shadows into a sea of shimmering gold.

There was no wind, and a faint thin column of blue smoke rising from a pocket in an expanse of jumbled black boulders stood like a pencil on end, at last becoming a sun-kissed film high above the earth. The smoke came from a tiny fire over which Nina was preparing food. Suddenly it became fainter and the base of the column rose skyward. The whole thing floated away from the earth in an irregular miniature cloud and was lost in the nothingness above.

Omar had thrown sand over the fire, covering every trace of it.

"It should have been put out sooner," he growled. "There's a time between daybreak and sunup when a man can't see smoke. We waited too long. Come on. Get going along."

Nina frowned at him. "We have to eat."

He made no reply, but looked about for a sign which would disclose the place they had camped to possible pursuers.

They rode at a steady pace over a twisting course, following no trail or track, and giving their horses free rein. The tranquillity of the immense land was absolute. As far as the eye could reach there was nothing but an impressive immobility. Nothing lived on earth or in the sky, and they moved under the great dome which rested its azure weight on the irregular horizon as three creeping mites.

There was nothing holy about Nina now. She was wearing a man's hat from under which her chestnut hair hung in two braids; a loose green blouse, divided skirt and boots. A green handkerchief fluttered at her throat.

He told me something of her personal life here as he had learned it from Omar. I was amazed at his memory of details, but I thought perhaps there was a reason why such a lasting impression had been made on his mind.

She was not a western girl. She had been

reared in Ohio and had entered the church after a disastrous love affair with a young lawyer. A child had been born to her and she had been cast from her home in disgrace. The young lawyer ran off to seek his fortune in the new Kansas. Desperate and destitute she had abandoned the child and turned to the church. Several years later she was sent in answer to a call for sisters from Santa Fe.

When she met Omar she was prepared to desert the church. The west, possibly its distance from her native environment and the strangeness of the country, had led her to throw off the yoke of shame with which she had been burdened and dispel her fear of condemnation by the outside world. She discovered that she really had nothing to fear but herself. And she was no longer afraid of herself. Although desertion with Omar was a desperate way out, one which easily might have placed her in a worse predicament, she had not hesitated. She was not cowardly. And the great golden-haired outlaw was compelling; he gave her every confidence she needed. She came back into the world of men a felon, a fugitive from both God and justice, the mistress of a bandit, riding into a wild land to escape apprehension.

At midday they paused in their monotonous journey and ate cold food, washing down meat and bread with tepid water from their canteens.

Nina rested in the shade of a juniper. She asked wearily, "Do you still think we are being followed?" She had asked the same question a dozen times.

"No," Omar replied emphatically. "I think only a fool would follow a man into such a place."

"Then we are not fools."

Adam looked at her. "That remains to be learned."

Her laugh sounded empty, a voice from a hollow box. She looked at the two men with an expression of frank hopelessness. "I've been a fool all my life. We're being followed. I feel it. We'll be caught at the end of this desert."

"The end?" Adam muttered.

"Well, certainly there's an end."

Omar turned a twig between thumb and

forefinger and tossed it away. "Who knows? If we had knowed what was in this direction we wouldn't have come. We came this way because we didn't know what was ahead. And I guess there ain't very many who do know. There mighten't be water for two hundred mile. We might never find an end."

She stood up. "Well, then why go on? Do you think I want to die in a desert?"

The Swede shrugged his shoulders. "When you come to die, it don't make any difference where you do it."

"Oh. Well, it does to me. I'm not inviting death. I want to live first. I never got much pleasure from life."

"You're getting as much as we are now," the Swede said calmly.

She gave way to her anger. "What is pleasure to you may be hell to me . . . Look here, are you going to take me into this desert not knowing whether we will come out alive?"

"If I am," he replied slowly, "I'm taking myself, too. And Adam."

Hatred showed in her eyes. "I don't know what you'd do now. You've changed." She turned to Adam. "Can't we camp here a day or two and then go back?"

He shook his head. "I don't think so."

"Then here's where we separate," she cried. "We'll divide the money. I go back."

Adam got up and walked toward the horses. The Swede followed him. But when her horse was ready she mounted.

During the long afternoon the three rode again at the continuous pace which makes possible the traversing of long distances without exhaustion. Westward steadily each horse and rider moved as a machine, and the red sun dropping beyond the earth struck on their faces and on the faces of the sharp mesa walls and round red hills with the same fiery glow, making them with the power of its almighty light a part of the great barren world, melting and blending into one impressive colored sea, heaven and human, earth and beast.

As the shadows lengthened they began to watch for a place to camp, observing closely the surrounding country. At intervals they stopped and gazed into the distance. The land had changed little in topography dur-

ing the long hours of the day, becoming with the passing of each mile only more empty. Crossing through one deep wash in which capricious spring freshets had bared the soil's crimson veins and left them torn and bleeding on the yellow flesh brought before them only another wash no less deep, no less torturous, or a burning flat, a dust-swept mesa, a dry plain to be crossed.

They camped at last on a high red ridge running away to the north in a great circular swing. The dying sun nicked its edge on the farthest western wall. Suddenly it was gone, leaving the smouldering ruins of its destruction.

The darkness creeping swiftly out of the east swallowed the mountains, the hills, the mesas. The tiny fire over which they prepared some food made a yellow cavern in the complete blackness under the cold desert stars. There was no sound, and the chill of night descending upon the earth left nothing for contemplation.

At dawn they rode westward again under a burning sun and the unbroken lustre of the sky. With the passing of the early morning hours the country became less rugged and ran away at a gentle slope into a great valley to the northwest as if some mighty subterranean force had tilted the earth in that direction.

Ahead of them the folds in the hills were plainly marked in thin dark lines appearing as blue threads drawn through a red and orange blanket. They knew that the blue lines were trees, and trees meant water, the liquid life of which their canteens were so nearly devoid. The horses, sensing the oasis they were approaching, increased their pace and traveled swiftly over the rocky ground.

The two men were alert, lithe between cantle and horn, scanning the far hills. They saw the appearance of animal life about them, on the earth and above it. Once more other things beside themselves were alive. Rodents scurried from their path, sounding alarms. They saw birds, winged insects, and creeping, crawling things beneath the queer bushy plants which covered the country in a pale green blanket. Riding down into a deep bowl, they came to a grassy plain.

At noon they drank from a clear creek which followed a crooked course through an immense pine park. Against the face of a high white wall the stream divided and formed an island of several hundred yards in length. The island was clear of underbrush, and the great trees had laid a soft and heavy carpet of pine needles over the ground.

I went by automobile, reaching the Island in the Valley in a few hours. I doubted if it had been changed a great deal. The buildings were there, the corrals, and the fences about irrigated pastures. If he, Adam, was not the first white man to explore it, then his predecessor had left no record. The Indians had always hunted through it (they did when I was there), but there was no pueblo for fifty miles.

He had known it a good many years when I came to talk with him. I wondered how he felt that first day, and I decided that the beauty, the immensity and the emptiness had stirred him. For after all he had some of the spirit of the true adventurer in him, the man who does not care whether a discovery benefits him privately, but who thrills at the sight of a barren desert useless to man or beast upon which his eyes are the first to rest.

One day he went alone to sit on the high brink of a cliff and listen . . . listen in dreamy stillness to the promising whisper of the desert wind blowing in the tall trees, to sit in dreamy indolence with his back to a rock and gaze out over the patchwork of colors as far as his eyes could distinguish earth from sky.

Another day he followed the creek downstream for several miles, and camped at night where it melted into the earth on an alkali flat which shimmered in dazzling white like a great sheet spread across the valley.

And on another day, while Omar and Nina rested idly in the camp on the Island, he rode upstream until he had come to a small canyon deep in the heart of a great forest. Here was a small lake, green and crystal-clear, the headwaters of the creek. Snow water from the high peaks beyond trickled into the canyon and was caught there to form a natural reservoir. From the outlet of the

lake he could gaze down upon a jumbled world, green and yellow with forest and desert. Behind him the peaks tore apart the sky.

I do not know how long they remained in their retreat. Probably a fortnight. They must have suffered, for after their small supply was exhausted their only food was venison and fish which they shot. Nina continued to complain, to be troublesome. Once she struck Omar. He only turned away from her as if somewhat disdainful, ignoring her fury. She flew into a rage on other occasions, working herself up to a point of collapse. And when she saw them bury most of the money, preparatory to leaving, she went into such a tantrum that he threw cold water on her. Her chief desire was to leave the west, return to the east and spend her share of the money on the worldly things she had so long dreamed of having once more. When she realized this was not to be her lot, she threatened to end her life.

The Texas Swede considered her calmly, saying finally, "That's your right. We won't stop you."

She ran out of camp obviously determined to destroy herself, but in the evening she returned and hungrily partook of roasted venison.

They rode out of the valley toward the southwest, by a circular course reaching a Mexican town. He did not tell me the name of the town, and it was apparent he did not care to. I did not feel that it mattered. Any town would have served. But from what he said I thought of the name of Agua Blanca, and to make the narrative as complete as possible I used it.

When they reached it they left Nina in a secluded camp just outside, and then rode in along a dusty, crooked street toward the small plaza. They rode slowly, their eyes wandering from door to door as if seeking in the emptiness of the narrow thoroughfare a face, a living object on which to rest; but so complete was the siesta (it was high noon) of the little village that they were unheralded by even so insignificant a thing as the cry of a child or the bark of a dog.

No Americans lived in Agua Blanca. Few wanderers ever visited it. It lay off the path of any western trail. The Mexicans

who for centuries had made up its populace lived from small patches of vegetables and fruits which they irrigated. They herded their goats, ground their flour, threshed their grain in the methods of their forefathers, cut off from the rest of the world as if they were on another earth.

It was a safe retreat for them. They must have been aware of its isolation, aware of the fact that not even soldiers, and only an occasional trader, visited it.

Reaching the burning plaza, they rode straightway across its center. They disappeared from sight through an arched gate to the El Centro, and the plaza was once more abandoned to its former serenity and dazzling emptiness, the heart of a dead village on a dead earth.

They remained in the El Centro throughout the afternoon. At dusk they rode out to get Nina, planning to return and quarter themselves in a Mexican house with whose master they had talked in the trading-store. They crossed a bottom land on the outskirts, approaching the trees in which they had left her from the opposite direction in which they had first gone into them. The western sky was copper, low along the horizon, and the stillness of the desert evening was broken only by the twitter of a bird in the cottonwoods ahead of them.

When they came into the trees they stopped and leaned forward listening. They heard only the faint stirring of leaves and the sound of white water in an *acequia* which skirted the grove.

"Her horse nickers when another comes near," said Adam quietly.

Omar nodded. "Wait here."

He rode on and was lost to sight in the trees. Adam heard a fallen branch crack as his horse stepped on it. Then Omar whistled. He rode after him.

When they came into the small clearing in which they had left Nina they found only a pack-sack and two of their canteens. Nina and her horse were gone.

Omar dismounted slowly. He stood staring at the equipment. Suddenly he laughed, and the sounds resounded through the darkening grove.

Continued in the next issue

LITERARY NEWS

Continued from front advertising section

In Tragic Life, are bringing out a first book by a Montana author, MISS LAVERNE HARRIET FITZGERALD of Great Falls. Her story *Black Feather*, deals with the now extinct pygmy tribe of Sheepwater Indians of Yellowstone Park.

An exhibit of books by Everett authors was held during the last week in January. The list of writers was headed by MAX MILLER, whose *I Cover the Water Front* made him famous, and included NORA BURLON, ROYCE BRIER, ELSIE KNISEL, WILLIAM SHELTON, FLORENCE BARRETT WILLOUGHBY, ANNA YULE, LENA TRASLEY, MRS. JOHN B. MOYER, HENRY COBURN ALLEN, GERTRUDE D. OPTIMUS, RICHARD B. HASSELL, the late SUSAN WHITCOMB HASSELL, CHART PITT, and others.

LUCIE DELARUE MARDRUS made a tour of the United States two years ago, and published her impressions in her book, *Le Far West d'Aujourd'hui*, which gives most delightful mention of LILLIAN WHITE SPENCER's Indian poems and her translations from the French. Madame Mardrus includes a sonnet of Mrs. Spencer's, the only English in the book.

Son of the Morning: A Portrait of Friedrich Nietzsche by EDWARD J. O'BRIEN contains nine full photographs and a comprehensive bibliography. It is published by Robert O. Ballou, 2 West 13 St., N. Y. C., and is getting an enthusiastic press. In *The Best Short Stories of 1933* Mr. O'Brien reprints JOSE GARCIA VILLA's *The Fence* from *The Prairie Schooner*.

The Windsor Quarterly, multigraphed, will publish distinctive fiction and poetry of any length. The first issue is announced for April, Windsor, Vt. From North Montpelier, Vt., comes *First Harvest*, a *Driftwood* anthology compiled by WALTER JOHN COATES.

WARREN E. CRANE, on the staff of the Seattle *Post-Intelligencer* and member of the Northwest Academy of Arts, has a new book of folklore, *Totem Tales*, Indian legends for children. The Seattle *Argus* seems to take in bad part JAMES STEVENS' story of early Seattle, published in the *American Mercury*, December.

A community contest in the seven arts (painting, literature, music, dance, drama, architecture, and sculpture) is being sponsored by the Billings Woman's Club, in a National Federation of Women's Clubs contest, under the chairmanship of Mrs. RUTH ANN HINES, 1115 North 31st street, Billings, Montana. All work submitted must be done within the year, March 1932-1933. The contest will conclude with a grand exhibition, March 6, 1933.

BOOK SHELF

Continued from page 236

higher level than those of 1931, although no one poem is so finely fresh, vigorous, and accomplished as two or three poems in the earlier volume. The poems are in no sense regional. Joseph Auslander, Lew Sarett, and Clinton Scollard judged the club's poems for the making of the volume.

A Frontier Lady. Sarah Royce. Yale Univ. Press. 1932. \$2.00.

This account, edited by Ralph Gabriel of Yale University, of an overland ox-team trip to California in 1849 and of sojourn in mining camps and in San Francisco in the 1850's was written by the mother of Josiah Royce, late professor of philosophy at Harvard, at his request when he was himself asked to write a book on California. It is therefore not a contemporary account but a carefully written reminiscence of a cultured, religious lady. The drama, the difficulties, the roughness of life, the hardships are all in the book, but are largely left, through the writer's restraint and persistent religious comforting, to the reader's imagination. On the whole, details are avoided for the quiet, and effective, recital of generalities. Here is a gentlewoman's response to the hard circumstances of pioneer life.

H. G. Merriam

California Poets. Foreword by Helen Hoyt. Henry Harrison. 1932. \$3.00.

Two hundred and forty-four writers contribute to this significant state anthology. It contains much interesting information in its foreword by Helen Hoyt, and poems by writers whose names are guarantee of excellence. Now this is a book the compiler has a right to be enthusiastic about, were it only on the score of the labor that goes into such a compilation.

Martinsdale, Montana Grace Stone Coates

BOOKS RECEIVED

From Henry Harrison

The Second Florida Poets. Foreword by Vivian Yeiser Laramore. 1932. \$2.00.

Georgia Poets. Foreword by Mary Brent Whiteside. 1932. \$2.00.

District of Columbia Poets. Foreword by Edith Mirick. 1932. \$2.00.

American College Verse. Illustrated by Charles Cullen. 1932. \$2.50.

From Dorrance and Company

Worn Shoes. Patti C. Broadhurst. 1932. \$1.50.

Boy for a Blond. Paul Waterman. \$1.75.

The Pot Bellied Gods. Robert D. Abrahams. \$1.50.

Rain on the Rocks. Dorothy Elizabeth Stroh. \$1.25.

Within My Heart. Alice Hirsh. \$1.50.

First Harvest. Sabra-Frances Rollins. 1932. \$2.00.

Snow-in-Summer. Edith Parker Hinckley. Privately printed. 1932.

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by ROBERT NATHAN

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