

FASCINATING FEATURES For YOUNG FOLKS

How Ernest Saved The Herd

By WILDER GRAHAME

IT WASN'T very pleasant to be left outside the stockade to guard the corral gates, with no companions but a pony and the three thousand six hundred half-wild and restless cattle. Most boys of fourteen would not have relished the position even in a time of peace. And now a band of desperados of the worst type was known to be approaching. White savages who have no fear of the law are worse than savage Indians. A scout had brought word that the terrible "Bolter gang" were on their way to raid the cattlemen of the valley, and all hands had since been busy gathering the scattered settlers into the central stockade for protection against this marauding band of "rustlers," or cattle thieves.

Whatever may be said against the cowboy, laziness and cowardice are not among his failings; so it is not surprising that the ranchmen began to prepare most actively to give their unwelcome visitors a warm reception.

Upon the mountain lay the scout, waiting to send the signal of warning when the foe should enter the pass. Below, fearless riders dashed over the plains, bringing in the scattered cattle and preparing for a long and vigorous defense. Until the signal came there was no danger, and, as all hands were needed in driving up the more distant herds, the stockade was for the time left comparatively undefended. That was how it came to pass that Ernest was left alone to guard the corral gates till the remaining cattle were driven in and the heavy fastenings safely secured. There was little for him to do but watch till the other herds arrived. Then he would have to swing the big gates open and help turn the leaders in. This might mean some hard riding and not a little danger. Often

the least unusual thing is enough to start those herds of half-wild cattle on a mad stampede before which there is no safety but in flight. A single misstep, and horse and rider would be trampled to pieces by a thousand hoofs.

The cattle were restless that day—ready for a stampede on the slightest provocation. As though they scented danger, they sniffed the air, pawed and lowed till Ernest began to fear they would attempt to break from the Inclosure.

Within the stockade the women were doing what they could in preparation for the coming fight. Guns were being cleaned and examined, ammunition boxes dragged into more convenient places, and the little fortress strengthened in every possible manner. In fact, every one was busy at some active work except the scout, away up on the mountain, and Ernest. No wonder the lad felt almost alone in the world.

Would the men be ready to return before the signal came? Of course they would be all right, anyhow, for they would have time to get back after Bolter came in sight of the scouts. They could leave the rest of the herds, if necessary. But the excitement of the cattle he was guarding seemed contagious, and Ernest's restlessness, like theirs, increased. He galloped up to a little plateau, and, dismounting, looked anxiously toward the spot where the scout was stationed, as if expecting his signal. His attention was about equally divided between the trail by which the men would come and the lookout on the mountain. The lad was not by any means a coward. Accustomed as he was to the dangers and hardships of frontier life, even the cowboys admired his daring. Still, it was with a keen sense of relief that he saw an ap-

proaching cloud of dust that told him the men were coming. But was it really the men? The cattle never came see him and give warning—unless he had been surprised and captured. Older heads than Ernest's would have been anxious



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like that unless they were stampeding. Surely that couldn't be Bolter! The scout would have been sure to at that moment. Furiously the cloud of dust approached, drew near, then parted, and out of it

there came, not horns, but horses ridden as if the evil one possessed the reins. There was—there could be—no more doubt. It was Bolter and his gang.

Ernest's first thought was of the men scattered hopelessly over the valley; then of the women and children in the stockade, defenseless and as yet unconscious of their danger; then of the cattle. Ah the cattle! Putting spurs to his horse, he dashed to the corral gates, tore them wide open, and then flew to the rear of the Inclosure, and, shouting like a maniac, swung his coat in the air above his head. For one instant three thousand six hundred heads were in the air. The next, four times as many hoofs went thundering down the valley in a hopeless stampede. A railroad train would not have stopped that rush. Nothing could withstand or check it.

The advancing horsemen drew rein for a moment astonished at the commotion. Then, as the full sense of their danger burst upon them, they turned about and fed helter-skelter for their lives. Desperate men they were, and only desperate riding could save them.

When the cowboys returned, the noise and dust had died away, and the desperados were disorganized and scattered. Here was the ranchmen's chance, and so well did they improve it, thanks to their habit of quick thinking and acting in an emergency, that Bolter left nearly half his gang prisoners in the hands of their intended victims.

Cowboy skill soon rounded up the scared and scattered cattle. The scout? Poor fellow, he had kept his last watch. Bolter's sharpshooters had surprised him at the post of duty. And Ernest? Well, a week later, a half-dozen of the ranch owners came up from Denver and held a meeting in the main ranch house. As they sat around the fire they were told the story of Ernest's exploit, and immediately they clubbed together to send him East to school. He graduated with high honors, and not many years later became the prosperous owner of the very ranch which his pluck and cool-headedness had saved from Bolter and his desperados.

AN OLD-TIME CALIFORNIA BURGLAR, by JOAQUIN MILLER

IN the fall of 1849, Mr. Andrew Jackson Larison sailed out of Boston harbor for the gold mines of California.

The first day out the handle of his name was knocked off, for this bright and handsome boy was working his way on a sailing ship around Cape Horn, and sea captains of those days had no time to waste on long names. He was only Larison after he left land and his visiting card behind him.

On landing in San Francisco, Mr. Andrew Jackson Larison of Boston, Massachusetts, was taken down with smallpox. The poor fellow left the hospital without a dollar or a friend, and with hardly a spare garment. Still he was stout of heart, a brave and determined boy, as were ten thousand others of those times who were trying to make a little fortune for the dear ones at home, and he did not falter.

The day after leaving the hospital, with his pale, thin face all in dots and spots, he engaged to work his passage up the Sacramento River to the mines.

"What is your name?" demanded the gruff captain with a green patch on his right eye and a silver-mounted six-shooter in his belt.

"Andrew Jackson Larison, sir," said the pale young man with the spots and dots on his face.

"Hey? Well, Mr. Andrew Jackson Lazarus," roared the captain, "take that coal-shovel and report to the mate, and be quick about it, too."

And so Lazarus became his name—Lazarus, and Lazarus only, for soon the other parts of his name were again rubbed off.

When young Larison reached the gold mines he found there had been a great stampede for miles said to be of fabulous richness farther on over the mountains. All along the banks of the little gold-bearing river he saw deserted cabins, the latching hanging out ready for any who chose to enter and take possession.

A good custom was this in the old days. Let a party of gold hunters, game hunters or even hunters after health, go into the mountains and build a cabin for the season, care was always taken to leave it neat and clean and ready for the first poor wayfarer who might pass that way.

Larison pushed as far up on the stream as his legs would take him the first day. Near the lead of the placer mines he found a cabin with the rickety door wide open. He entered and took possession.

A fine stream of water rippled and ran through the mossy boulders under the great, sweeping pine and fir and yew trees. The place was so still that the young man could hear his heart beat as he stood on the earthen floor before the huge fireplace and looked about. In one corner was a battered old rocker, a

shovel, pick and a few other tools. In the southwest corner arose a tier of "bunks," not unlike the berths of a ship in arrangement. In each bunk was spread a thick layer of fir and pine boughs, which gave out a pleasant odor. But on the topmost bunk, best of all, the thoughtful miners, on going away, had thrown their rough, outer clothing as well as some empty flour sacks, gunny bags and so on.

Larison hastily climbed up to this topmost bunk, by setting his feet on the two lower bunks as if mounting a ladder, and the poor fellow soon had a fairly comfortable bed arranged on top of the fragrant boughs. Then he descended, struck a match, and from the pine quills and pine knots he had at the door for the picking up, he built a fire so bright that it lit up the laughing little stream through the open door.

He went out, washed his hands and face in the cool water, took a refreshing drink, returned to his cabin, closed the door, and dined heartily on cookies and cheese which the gruff but kind old captain had made him put in his pocket on leaving the boat.

Our young gold-hunter slept soundly. He was now "an honest miner," with cabin, bunk, tools, claim—all things, indeed, but gold. Was the gold there in the ground, down on the bedrock, deep under the big mossy boulders? He would soon see.

With sleeves rolled above his elbows, and with bare feet, he wrought and he wrestled till nearly sundown. Not a "color," although he struck the hard, blue bedrock in many places that first day.

He climbed out of his claim, very tired and hungry, but not disheartened. The water had sung pleasantly to him all day. Beautiful wild flowers had leaned out from the bank, as if to comfort him in his solitude. The great solemn pines sang their mighty monotone in the warm winds of the sierras high over his head, and it made him think pleasantly of the pine woods of home.

He had passed by a small grocery store the evening before, a mile or so down the stream. Thither he now returned, after arranging his tattered raiment as best he might, and laid his case before the bearded Missourian who kept the "store." As the Missourian was both kind and anxious to see work resumed at the deserted diggings, he readily let Larison have "on tick" what he timidly asked for—a codfish and two pounds of crackers.

Next day the same song of the pines, the same sweet flowers leaning from the banks of the tumbling little stream, the same strenuous toil, too—but not a color of gold.

The lad was growing dizzy as he leaned over to strike a few last blows in the depths of a crevice of

the bedrock which he had been following all day without even a color to encourage him. His pick sank deep—deeper than ever before—and the clear



"THE SMELL OF HAM HAD MADE THE BEAR A BURGLAR."

water took on a dirty clay hue. He leaned over, took a handful of this dirty yellow stuff from the point of his pick, and was about to throw it behind him and strike again, when he saw something glitter in his

hand. He stooped to the water, and saw—"Gold! gold! gold!"

It did not take long to let the water wash the clay away as it ran gurgling down the crevice. Before it was yet fairly night the hungry man had nearly filled with gold dust a little pint cup which he found in the cabin.

But it was clear that this was only a "pocket." If he had had half a day still before him he would have been able to scoop it out and turn his back on it all, in which case this story would not have been written.

The resolute boy had those dependent on him far away who were very dear. They would need all the gold. And then it was only one more day at furthest. He would remain to get all. With this resolution and a light heart, although a heavy step, he tottered down to the store. He would not—he could not—leave his gold behind him. He went his way, thinking all the time what he would have to eat on his return.

Ham! Ham and onions! Fried ham and onions! That was what he would have. He almost ran as he neared the store.

Four men were playing cards at a table as he came in. Two others lay on benches asleep. The return tide of the stampede had set in, and men were not nearly so scarce in the camp as before. Larison let his gold sink deep down in his pocket.

He found the bearded Missourian behind his counter, and asked to pay his bill. The storekeeper seemed to have forgotten him. But after looking him in the face for a while he said: "Oh, yes, yes; I remember you now. Let me see what it was you got."

Turning around to the wall he put his finger on a number of little dots and spots. These were, for Larison's name; for the storekeeper could not read. Under the spots and dots were the tail of a fish and the outline of a cracker, with four little marks below.

"I also want a ham and a pound of crackers—a whole ham. I'm hungry. And I want onions—a pound of onions!"

The storekeeper handed over the ham, tied up the crackers and took the gold and weighed out his due. Larison immediately picked up his bundle and started for his cabin.

How fast he did walk! And how fragrant was that ham as it fried and cooked in the new fire on the hearthstone! The bag of gold he laid on the table. Now and then the young man turned his eye from the pan to the gold with a happy heart. One more day, then home!

He set the pan of frizzling ham on the table, closed the door and sat down to his meal.

Suddenly there was a noise outside. The young man started to his feet, trembling and pale. The noise grew louder, as of many feet, now close to the door.

But he did not lose his presence of mind. He was certain the noise was of the four men he had seen at the card table.

He had noticed them shrink from him and whisper among themselves. At the time he had thought they were referring to the fresh marks of smallpox on his face. The singular way in which the storekeeper had set down his name on the wall confirmed him in this. But why should those men come to rob him if they believed he had the smallpox? Was his gold more precious to them than life?

How quickly a man thinks at a time like this! What was to be done? He was alone and unarmed. There were, he believed, four burglars—no doubt all well armed. The noise grew louder. There was a great rattling at the frail door.

Suddenly Larison made his plan. He dashed the gold against the stone wall that formed the back of the chimney. The precious contents sank down safe in the deep ashes.

Then with one bound Larison sprang up high in the topmost bunk and covered his face as he groaned: "Smallpox! Smallpox!"

The door was now broken open with a terrific crash. Then Larison heard the din and rattle and noise of heavy feet. But there was no word spoken except by the youth with covered face, high up in the corner, who uttered the wall of "Smallpox! Smallpox! Smallpox!"

After a time Larison paused to listen. He could now hear nothing at all but the beating of his heart. He rubbed his hands with glee at the thought of his shrewd device. The gold, he knew, was all there in the ashes. Half an hour's washing would restore it to him. Then he would get the rest out of the pocket, and strike for Massachusetts by the shortest possible route. Planning this, still full of heart and hope, he turned over in his bunk and fell asleep.

The sun was high when he awoke. Peering out cautiously, quite ready to hide his head and cry "Smallpox!" at the first sight or sound of an intruder, he saw, heard—nothing at all!

Then he came down and looked about. The crackers were gone. The frying pan lay upside down on the floor. The ham was gone also!

Turning to the door in a bewildered fashion he saw on the soft earth outside the tracks of his assailant. They were big, broad tracks—the tracks of a grizzly bear. The smell of ham had made the bear a burglar!

But Larison was rich!

THE BETTER PART OF VALOR by Carolyn Wells



I. The fearlessst baby you ever did see Was little Xantippe Zenobia A. Lee;



She calmly stood still, without tremor or shock, When she saw her, great-grandmother's great turkey-cock.



II. When to ruffle his feathers the turkey began, Do you think that Xantippe Zenobia ran?



No! She turned up her queer little nose, and said "Pooh! You needn't think that I'm frightened at you!"



III. The turkey swelled bigger; his tail-feathers spread; And he puffed up his wings. Then he wagged his head



And looked toward the baby With agonized squeals Xantippe Zenobia took to her heels!