

The Ranch at the Wolverine

By B. M. BOWER

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I—Marthy, low-browed, uncombed, harsh of voice and speech and nature, with her pitiless husband Jase, journey over desert trails, driving four oxen and are the pioneers whose lurching wagon first fords the Wolverine stream. Jase is ready to stop at the first green spot, but Marthy insists on plodding along another full day's journey. That night, through natural instinct, two of the oxen stray into a narrow gorge and feast on the rich grasses of the Cove, where they are found by Marthy who recognizes the little, hidden ketch as the place of her dream and the pioneers at once take possession. Later they are joined by another couple who are impressed with the Wolverine and also establish a home. To them is born a daughter, christened Billy Louise.

CHAPTER II—After a visit to Marthy, Billy Louise on her horse Blue reaches home late in a snow storm, having met a stranger riding over the same trail. He is invited to stop for the night and is welcomed by Billy Louise's mother. Introduced himself as Ward Warren who has a claim on Mill Creek.

CHAPTER III—Marthy is horrified to find that Jase has died during the night. Digging a grave in a level place above the main ditch she wheels Jase's body on the home-made wheelbarrow and buries her dead. Charlie Fox, her nephew arrives.

CHAPTER IV—Fox rides to Billy Louise's ranch to inquire if she has seen anything of four of their calves which disappeared, theft is discussed, and Billy Louise starts in spring.

CHAPTER V—Spring has come, but Billy Louise is not affected by the beauties of Wolverine canyon, for she is brooding over her disappointments and is on the brink of nervous breakdown when she finds one of her finest cows dead, and she has a machinery note due. Two men approach on horses looking about for missing stock. Blue rides to Ward's cabin, but he is not there.

CHAPTER VI.

The Corral in the Canyon.

QUITE suddenly, just at sundown, Billy Louise's journeying was interrupted in a most unexpected manner. She was dreaming along a flat bottomed canyon, looking for an easy way across, when Blue threw up his head, listened with his ears thrust forward and sniffed with widened nostrils. From his manner almost anything might be ahead of them. And because certain of the possibilities would call for quick action if any of them became a certainty Billy Louise twisted her gun belt around so that her six shooter swung within easy reach of her hand. With her fingers she made sure that the gun was loose in its holster and kicked Blue mildly as a hint to go on and see what it was all about.

Blue went forward, stepping easily on the soft side hill. In rough country whatever you want to see is nearly always around a sharp bend; you read it so in the stories and books of travels and when you ride out in the hills you find it so in reality. Billy Louise rode for three or four minutes before she received any inkling of what lay ahead, though Blue's behavior during that interval had served to reassure her somewhat. He was interested still in what lay just out of sight beyond a shoulder of the hill, but he did not appear to be in the least alarmed. Therefore Billy Louise knew it couldn't be a bear, at any rate.

They came to the point of the hill's shoulder and Billy Louise tightened the reins instinctively while she stared at what lay revealed beneath. The head of the gulch was blocked with a corral—small, high, hidden from view on all sides save where she stood, by the jagged walls of rock and heavy aspen thickets beyond.

The corral was but the setting for what Billy Louise stared at so unbelievably. A horseman had ridden out of the corral just as she came into sight, had turned a sharp corner and had disappeared by riding up the same slope she occupied, but farther along and in a shallow depression which hid him completely after that one brief glimpse.

Of course the gulch was dusky with deep shadows, and she had had only a glimpse. But the horse was a dark bay and the rider was slim and tall and wore a gray hat. The heart of Billy Louise paused a moment from its steady beating and then sank heavily under a great weight. She was range born and range bred. She had sat wide eyed on her daddy's knees and heard him tell of losses in cattle and horses and of corals found hidden away in strange places and of unknown riders who disappeared mysteriously into the hills. She had heard of these things; they were a part of the stage setting for wild dramas of the West.

With a white line showing around her close pressed lips and a horror in her wide eyed glance she rode quietly along the side of the bluff toward where she had seen the horseman disappear. He was riding a dark bay and he wore a gray hat and dark coat, and he was slim and tall. Billy Louise made a sound that was close to a groan and set her teeth hard together afterward.

She reached the hillside just above the corral. There were cattle down there, moving uneasily about in the shadows. Of the horseman there was, of course, no sign—just the corral and a few restless cattle shut inside—and on the hilltops a soft, rose violet glow and in the sky beyond a blend of purple and deep crimson to show where the sun had been. Close beside her as

she stood looking down a little, gray bird twittered wistfully.

Billy Louise took a deep breath and rode on, angling slightly up the bluff so that she could cross at the head of the gulch. It was very quiet, very peaceful and wildly beautiful, this jumble of hills and deep gashed canyons. But Billy Louise felt as though something precious had died. She should have gone down and investigated and turned those cattle loose—that is, if she dared. Well, she dared; it was not fear that held her to the upper slopes. She did not want to know what brand they bore or whether an iron had seared fresh marks.

"Oh, God!" she said once aloud, and there was a prayer and a protest, a curse and a question all in those two words.

So trouble—trouble that sickened her very soul and choked her into dumbness and squeezed her heart so that the ache of it was agony—came and rode with her through the brooding dusk of the canyons and over the brighter hilltops.

Billy Louise did not remember anything much about that ride except that she was glad the way was long. Blue carried her steadily on and on and needed no guiding, and though Wolverine canyon was black dark in most places she liked it so.

John Pringle was standing by the gate waiting for her, which was unusual, if Billy Louise had been normal enough to notice it. He came forward and took Blue by the bridle when she dismounted, which was still more unusual, for Billy Louise always cared for her own horse both from habit and preference.

"Your mummy, she's sick," he announced stolidly. "She's worry you maybe hurt yourself. Yo better go, maybe."

Billy Louise did not answer, but ran up the path to the cabin. "Oh, has everything got to happen all at once?" she cried aloud, protesting against the implacableness of misfortune.

"Your mummy's sick," Phoebe announced in a whisper. "She's crazy cause you been so long. She's awful bad, I guess."

Billy Louise said nothing, but went in where her mother lay moaning, her face white and turned to the ceiling. Billy Louise herself had pulled up her reserves of strength and cheerfulness, and the fingers she laid on her mother's forehead were cool and steady.

"Poor old mummy! Is it that nasty umbago again?" she asked carelessly and did not permit the tiniest shade of anxiety to spoil the reassurance of her presence. "I went farther than usual and Blue's pretty tender, so I eased him along, and I'm fearfully late. I suppose you've been having all kinds of disasters happening to me." She was passing her fingers soothingly over her mother's forehead while she explained and she saw that her mother did not moan so much as when she came into the room.

"Of course I worried. I wish you wouldn't take them long rides. Oh, I guess it's lumbago—mostly—but seems like it ain't, either. The pain seems to be mostly in my side." She stirred restlessly and moaned again.

"What's Phoebe been doing for it? You don't seem to have any fever, mummy—and that's a good thing. I'll go fix you one of those dandy spice poultices. Had any supper, mummy?"

"Oh, I couldn't eat. Phoebe made a hop poultice, but it's awful soppy."

"Well, never mind. Your dear daughter is on the job now. She'll have you all comfy in just about two minutes. Hendahe, mum? All right, I'll just shake up your pilly and bring you such a dandy spice poultice I expect you'll want to eat it!" Billy Louise's voice was soft and had a broody sweetness when she wished it so, that soothed more than medicine. Her mother's eyes closed wearily while the girl talked; the muscles of her face relaxed a little from their look of pain.

Billy Louise bent and laid her lips lightly on her mother's cheek. "Poor old mummy! I'd have come home a-running if I'd known she was sick and had to have nasty, soppy stuff."

In the kitchen a very different Billy Louise measured spices and asked a question now and then in a whisper and breathed with a repressed unevenness which betrayed the strain she was under.

"Tell John to saddle up and go for the doctor, Phoebe, and don't tell mummy know whatever you do. This isn't her lumbago at all. I don't know what it is. I wonder if a hot turpentine cloth wouldn't be better than this? I've a good mind to try it; her eyes are glassy with fever and her skin is cold as a fish. You tell John to hurry up. He can ride Boxer. Tell him I want him to get a doctor here by tomorrow noon if he has to kill his horse doing it."

That night took its toll of Billy Louise and left a seared place in her memory. It was a night of snapping fire in the cook stove that hot water might be always ready; of tireless struggle with the pain that came and tortured, retired sullenly from Billy Louise's stubborn fighting with poultices and turpentine cloths and every homely remedy she had ever heard of, and came again just when she thought she had won the fight.

There was no time to give thought to the trouble that had ridden home with her, though its presence was like a black shadow behind her while she worked and went to and fro between bedroom and kitchen and fought that tearing pain.

She met the dawn hollow eyed and so tired she could not worry very much about anything. Her mother slept uneasily to prove that the battle had not gone altogether against the girl who had fought the night through. She had her reward in full measure when the doctor came, in the heat of noon, and after terrible minutes of suspense for Billy Louise while he counted pulse and took temperature and studied

symptoms, told her that she had done well and that she and her homely poultices had held back tragedy from that house.

Billy Louise lay down upon the couch out on the back porch and slept heavily for three hours, while Phoebe and the doctor watched over her mother.

She woke with a start. She had been dreaming, and the dream had taken from her cheeks what little color her night vigil had left. She had dreamed that Ward was in danger, that men were hunting him for what he had done at that corral. The corral seemed the center of a fight between Ward and the men. She dreamed that he came to her and that she must hide him away and save him. But though she took him to a cave, which was secret enough for her purpose, yet she could not feel that he was safe even there. There was something—some menace.

Billy Louise went softly into the house, tiptoed to the door of her mother's room and saw that she lay quiet, with her eyes closed. Beside the window the doctor sat with his spectacles far down toward the end of his nose, reading a pale green pamphlet that he must have brought in his pocket. Phoebe was down by the creek washing clothes in the shade of a willow clump.

She went into her own room, still walking on her toes. In her trunk was a blue plush box of the kind that is given to one at Christmas. It was faded and the clasp was showing brassy at the edges. Sitting upon her bed with the box in her lap Billy Louise pawed hastily in the jumble of keepsakes it held; an eagle's claw which she meant some time to have mounted for a brooch; three or four arrowheads of the shiny, black stuff which the Indians were said to have brought from Yellowstone park; a knot of green ribbon which she had worn to a St. Patrick's day dance in Boise; rattlesnake rattles of all sizes, several folded clippings—verses that had caught her fancy and had been put away and forgotten; an amber bead she had found once. She turned the box upside down in her lap and shook it. It must be there—the thing she sought, the thing that had troubled her most in her dream; the thing that was a menace while it existed. It was at the very bottom of the box, caught in a corner. She took it out with fingers that trembled, crumpled it into a little ball so that she could not read what it said, straightened it immediately and read it reluctantly from the beginning to the end where the last word was clipped short with hasty scissors. A paragraph cut from a newspaper it was; yellow and frayed from contact with other objects, telling of things—

Billy Louise bit her lips until they hurt, but she could not keep back the tears that came hot and stinging while she read. She slid the little heap of odds and ends to the middle of the bed, cradled the clipping into her palm and went out stealthily into the immaculate kitchen. As if she were being spied upon she went cautiously to the stove, lifted a lid and dropped the clipping in where the wood blazed the brightest. She watched it flare and become nothing—not even a pinch of ash; the clipping was not very large. When it was gone she put the lid back and went tiptoeing to the door. Then she ran.

Phoebe was down by the creek, so Billy Louise went to the stable, through that and on beyond, still running. Farther down was a grassy nook—on beyond the road. She went there and hid behind the willows, where she could cry and no one be the wiser. But she could not cry the ache out of her heart nor the rebellion against the hurt that life had given her. If she could only have burned memory when she burned that clipping! She could still believe and be happy if only she could forget the things it said.

Phoebe called her after a long while had passed. Billy Louise bathed her face in the cold water of the Wolverine, used her handkerchief for a towel and went back to take up the duties life had laid upon her. The doctor's team was hitched to the light buggy he drove, and the doctor was standing in the doorway with his square medicine case in his hand waiting to give her a few final directions before he left.

He was like so many doctors—he seemed to be afraid to tell the whole truth about his patient. He stuck to evasive optimism and then neutralized

himself by saying that she had done well and that she and her homely poultices had held back tragedy from that house.



He Was Like So Many Doctors—Afraid to Tell the Truth.

the reassurances he uttered by emphasizing the necessity of being notified if Mrs. MacDonald showed any symptoms of another attack.

Billy Louise ran into her own room, grabbed a can of talcum and did not wait to see whether she applied it evenly to her telltale eyelids, but dabbed at them on the way to her mother's room.

"Doctor says you're all right, mummy; only you mustn't go digging post holes or shoveling hay for awhile."

"No, I guess not!" Her mother responded unconsciously to the stimulation of Billy Louise's tone. "I couldn't dig holes with a teaspoon, I'm that weak and useless. Did he say what it was, Billy Louise?" The sick are always so curious about their illnesses.

"Oh, your lumbago got to scrapping with your liver. I forgot the name he gave it, but it's nothing to worry about." Billy Louise had imagination, remember.

"I guess he'd think it was something to worry about if he had it," her mother retorted fretfully, but reassured nevertheless by the casual manner of Billy Louise. "I believe I could eat a little mite of toast and drink some tea," she added tentatively.

"And an egg poached soft if you want it, mom. Phoebe just brought in the eggs." Billy Louise went out humming unconcernedly under her breath as if she had not a care beyond the proper toasting of the bread and brewing of the tea.

One need not go to war or voyage to the far corners of the earth to find the stuff heroes are made of.

(Continued next week)

The Sentinel receives inquiries every week from prospective settlers who wish copies of the paper. If you wish to sell your land your ad. should be in The Sentinel, where prospective settlers will see it.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

Notice is hereby given that Alf, Jury has been appointed executor of the last will and testament of Robert Griffin, deceased, by the county court of Lane county, Oregon, on the 19th day of February, A. D. 1918; that all persons having claims against said estate are hereby notified to present the same, duly verified, to said Alf, Jury at Bank of Cottage Grove in Cottage Grove, Oregon, within six months from date of first publication of this notice.

Date of first publication the 22nd day of February, 1918.

ALF, JURY, Executor.
H. J. SHINN, Attorney for estate. 122 m22

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at Roseburg, Oregon, February 4, 1918.

Notice is hereby given that James Albert Haynie, of Blakelyville, Oregon, who, on March 8, 1915, made Homestead Entry Serial No. 010928 for Lot 2 of Sec. 7, T. 29 S., R. 2 E., W. M., and on August 30, 1916, made Additional Homestead Entry Serial No. 010798 for the SW¹ of SE¹ of NW¹ of Section 7, Township 29 S., Range 2 E., Willamette Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final three-year proof to establish claim to the land above described, before E. O. Immel, U. S. Commissioner, at his office at Eugene, Oregon, on the 18th day of March, 1918.

Claimant names as witnesses: Harley O. Cain, of Blakelyville, Oregon; John M. Cain, of Blakelyville, Oregon; Joe Blakely, of Blakelyville, Oregon; Thomas C. May, of Landax, Oregon.

W. H. CANON, Register.

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NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at Roseburg, Ore., February 4, 1918.

Notice is hereby given that Harley O. Cain, of Blakelyville, Oregon, who, on March 8, 1915, made Adjoining Farm Homestead Entry, Serial No. 010929, for the Lot 7 of Section 7, Township 29 S., Range 2 E., Willamette Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final three-year proof to establish claim to the land above described, before E. O. Immel, U. S. Commissioner, at his office at Eugene, Oregon, on the 18th day of March, 1918.

Claimant names as witnesses: Albert Haynie, of Blakelyville, Oregon; John M. Cain, of Blakelyville, Oregon; Thomas C. May, of Landax, Oregon; Joseph A. Blakely, of Blakelyville, Oregon.

W. H. CANON, Register.

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ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned has been appointed by the county court for Lane county, Oregon, administratrix of the estate of Martha A. Stroud, deceased.

All persons having claims against said estate are required to present them to me duly verified, at Cottage Grove, Oregon, within six months after the date of first publication of this notice.

Date of first publication the 1st day of February, 1918.

MRS. C. B. PERRY, Administratrix of the estate of f1 m1 Mrs. Martha A. Stroud, deceased

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE OF FINAL SETTLEMENT.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned administrator of the estate of Emery L. Goodridge, deceased, has filed in the county court of Lane county, Oregon, his final account as such administrator of said estate and that Saturday, the 16th day of March, 1917, at the hour of 11 o'clock a. m. of said day has been set by said court for hearing objections to said report and the settlement thereof.

NEELSON DURHAM, Administrator of the Estate of f15 m15 Emery L. Goodridge, deceased.

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SILK CREEK.

(Special to The Sentinel.)

Feb. 27.—Mrs. I. N. Dresser, of Lynx Hollow, spent the week-end with friends here.

Miss Vesta Kruse, of Eugene, is spending the week at the Babcock home.

Ray Clevenger, of Eugene, spent Saturday at the Clevenger home.

Elmer Caldwell, formerly of this place but recently of Nebraska, visited Monday night at the Ashby home.

Mrs. Jennie Walker visited Monday at the Isaac Taylor home at Cottage Grove.

Otto Heine is moving his household goods into his home here.

Mr. Hopper is moving his furniture from here.

Miss Ruth Powell spent the week-end with friends in Cottage Grove.

Elder Rhodes and Dr. Lockwood, of Medford, Elder J. A. Rippey and S. C. Rockwell, of Roseburg, and Mr. Cook, of Ashland, met with the local board and church officers Wednesday forenoon to investigate the twelfth grade school proposition.

Miss Marjorie Gildersleve is at Mrs. Ima Benger's home in Cottage Grove for a time.

E. M. Babcock, M. F. Babcock, L. B. Slagle, John Ashby and H. M. Damewood were among those in the Grove on business Tuesday.

Mrs. Lou Wheeler went to the Grove Wednesday morning to say goodbye to her son, H. W. Wheeler, as he passed through that place on the early morning train on his way to California.

Clyde Burcham was out from Cottage Grove Sunday.

"Uncle" Jim Veatch, of Salem, was a guest at the Curtis Veatch home the first of the week.

Sam Damewood, of Wildwood, visit-

ed at the H. M. Damewood home Tuesday night.

Don't forget that by paying a full year's subscription in advance you get it at the old rate of \$1.50. The new rate applies on delinquent accounts only. If

The want ad. way is the right way, also the surest way. ***

SOUTHERN PACIFIC TIME TABLE	
North Bound	South Bound
No. 18—9:50 a. m.	No. 13—2:05 a. m.
No. 14—4:35 p. m.	No. 53—6:54 a. m.
No. 16—2:33 a. m.	No. 15—2:42 p. m.
No. 17—7:40 p. m.	No. 53 carries coaches only as far south as Ashland.



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