

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 shiftless husband Jase, journey over desert trail, 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 Eden as the place of her dreams 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. Introduces himself as Ward Warren who has a claim on Mill Creek.

CHAPTER III—Fox rides to Billy Louise's ranch to inquire if she has seen anything of four of their calves which disappeared; they are discussed, and Billy Louise starts in search.

CHAPTER IV—Spring has come, but Billy Louise is not affected by the beauties of Wolverine canyon, for she is brooding over her discouragements 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 horseback looking about for missing stock. She rides to Ward's cabin, but he is not there.

CHAPTER V—Riding along a flat-bottomed canyon she sees a horse-man resembling Ward dismount in the hills and later discovers a hidden corral such as she remembers being told about by her father. She is late in arriving, however, and her mother ill, and a physician is called, but he is not there.

CHAPTER VI—Riding along a flat-bottomed canyon she sees a horse-man resembling Ward dismount in the hills and later discovers a hidden corral such as she remembers being told about by her father. She is late in arriving, however, and her mother ill, and a physician is called, but he is not there.

CHAPTER VII—Billy Louise does not hold changeless her broken faith in Ward, although she has learned to love him. Ward meets her on the trail and is puzzled at her apparent coolness toward him and finds stock on which the brands have been changed to his own mark.

CHAPTER VIII—Riding over the hills looking for cattle brands, Ward discovers a hidden corral and sees three men, one of whom he believes to be Buck Olney. Upon their leaving he investigates and finds stock on which the brands have been changed to his own mark.

CHAPTER IX—After deliberating the brands Ward decides that Buck Olney will become suspicious of him as knowing about the plant. He cautiously keeps out of the way until his patience frazzles out and he finds stock on which the brands have been changed to his own mark.

CHAPTER X.

"So Long, Buck!"

WARD relighted the fire, which had gone out long ago, and set the dishpan on the stove with water to heat. He remade his bunk, spreading on the army blanket which he took from the saddle on Rattler. He swept the floor as neatly as any woman could have done it and laid two wolf skins down in their places where they did duty as rugs. He washed and wiped his few dishes, keeping Buck's knife always within reach and sending an inquiring glance toward Buck whenever that unhappy man made the slightest movement, though, truth to tell, Buck did not make many. He brought two pails of water and set them on the bench inside, and in the meantime he had cooked a mess of prunes and set them in a bowl on the window sill beside his bunk, where the air was coolest. He stropped his razor painstakingly and shaved himself in leisurely fashion and sent an occasional glance toward his prisoner from the looking glass, which made Buck swallow hard at his Adam's apple.

And Buck during all this time never once opened his lips, except to lick his tongue across them, and never once took his eyes off Ward.

"I've sure put the fear of the Lord into you, haven't I, Buck?" Ward observed maliciously, wiping a blob of hairy lather upon a page torn from an old mail-order catalogue. "I was kind a hoping you had more nerve. I wanted to get a whack at you just to prove I'm not joshing."

Buck swallowed again, but he made no reply.

Ward washed his face in a basin of steaming water, got a can of talcum out of the dish cupboard and took the soap shine off his cheeks and chin. He combed his hair before the little mirror, trying unavailingly to take the wave out of it with water and leaving it more crinkly over his temples than it had been in the first place, and retied the four-in-hand under the soft collar of his shirt.

"I wish you'd talk, Buck," he said, turning toward the other. He looked very boyish and almost handsome, except for the expression of his eyes, which gave Buck the shivers, and the set of his lips, which was cruel. "I've read how the Chinks hand out what they call the death-of-a-thousand-cuts. I was thinking I'd like to try it on you. But—oh, well, this is Friday. It may as well go as a hanging." He made a poor job of his calm irony, but Buck was not in the mental condition to be critical.

The main facts were sufficiently ominous to offset Ward's attempt at facetiousness. Indeed, the very weakness of the attempt was in itself ominous. Ward might try to be coldly malevolent, but the light that burned

in his eyes and the rage that tightened his lips gave the lie to his forced composure.

He went out and led up the horses to the door. He came back and started to untie Buck Olney's feet, then he thought him of the statement he had promised to write. He got a magazine and tore out the frontpiece—which, oddly enough, was a soubrier picture of Death hovering with outstretched wings over a battlefield—and wrote several lines in pencil on the back of it, where the paper was smooth and white.

"How's that?" he asked, holding up the paper so that Buck could read what he had written. "I ain't in the mood to sit down and write a whole book, so I had to boil down your pedigree. But that will do the business all right, don't you think?"

Buck read with staring eyes, looked into Ward's face and opened his lips for protest or pleading. Then he followed Ward's glance to the knife on the table and shut his mouth with a snap. Ward laughed grimly, picked up the knife and ran his thumb lightly over the edge to test its keenness. "Put a fresh edge on it for me, huh?" he commented. "Well, we may as well get started, I reckon. I'm getting almighty sick of seeing you around."

He loosened the rope that bound Buck to the chair and stood scowling down at him, drawing in a corner of his lip and biting it thoughtfully. Then he took his revolver and held it in his left hand, while with his right he undid the rope which bound Buck's hands.

"Stick your hands out in front of you," he commanded. "You'll have to ride a ways. There isn't any gallowes tree in walking distance."

"For God's sake, Ward!" Buck's voice was hoarse. The plea came out of its own accord. He held his hands before him, however, and he made no attempt to get out of the chair. He knew Ward could shoot all right with his left hand, you see. He had watched him practice on tin cans long ago when the two were friends.

"You know what I told you," Ward reminded him grimly and took up the knife with a deadly air that made the other suck in his breath. "Hold still! I'm liable to cut your throat if I make a mislick."

Really, it was the way he did it that made it terrible. The thing itself was nothing. He merely drew the back of the blade down alongside Buck's ear and permitted the point to scratch through the skin barely enough to let out a thin trickle of blood. A pin would have hurt worse. But Buck groaned and believed he had lost an ear. He breathed in gasps, but did not say a word.

"Go ahead. Talk all you want to, Buck," Ward invited, and wiped the knife blade on Buck's shoulder before he returned the weapon to its sheath in his inside coat pocket.

Buck flinched from the touch and set his teeth.

Ward tied his hands before him and told him to get up and go out to his horse. Buck obeyed with abject submission, and Ward's lip curled again as he walked behind him to the door. He had not the slightest twinge of pity for the man. He was gloatingly glad that he could make him suffer, and he inwardly cursed his own humanity for being so merciful. He ought to have cut Buck's ear off slick and clean instead of making a bluff at it, he told himself disgustedly. Buck deserved it and more.

He helped Buck into the saddle, took the short rope in his hands and fiddled Buck's feet under the horse, grasped the bridle reins and mounted Rattler. Without a word he set off up the rough trail toward Hardup, leading Buck's horse behind him.

"Before you go, Buck, I want to tell you that you needn't jolly yourself into thinking your death will be avenged. It won't. You noticed what I wrote, and there isn't a scrap of my writing anywhere in the country to catch me up—" Ward's thoughts went to Billy Louise, who had some very good samples, and he stopped suddenly. He was trying not to think of Billy Louise today. "Also when somebody happens to ride this way and sees you I won't be anywhere around."

"This is the tree," he added, stopping under a cottonwood that flung a big branch out over the narrow cow trail they were traveling. "The chances are friend Floyd will be ambling around this way in a day or two," he said hearteningly. "He can tend to the last sad rites and take charge of your horse. He's liable to be sore when he reads your pedigree, but I don't reckon that will make a great deal of difference. You'll get buried, all right, Buck."

Ward dismounted with a most businesslike manner and untied Buck Olney's rope from the saddle. "I can't spare mine," he explained laconically. He had some trouble in fashioning a hangman's noose. He had not had much practice, he remarked to Buck after the first attempt.

"How do you do it, Buck? You know more about these things than I do," he taunted. "You've helped hang lots of poor devils that will be glad to meet yuh with the devil today."

Buck Olney moistened his dry lips. Ward glanced at his face and looked quickly away. Staring, abject terror is not nice to look upon, even though the man is your worst enemy and is suffering justly for his sins. Ward's fingers fumbled the rope as though his determination were weakening. Then he remembered some things, hunched his shoulders, impatient of the merciful impulse, and began the knot again. An old prospector had shown him once how it was done.

"Of course a plain slipknot would do the business all right," he said. "But I'll try and give you the genuine thing, same as you gave the other fellows."

"Ward, for God's sake, let me go!" Ward started. He did not know that a man's voice could change so much in so short a time. He never would have recognized the tones as coming from Buck Olney's hoarse, complaint lips.

"Ward, I'll never—I'll leave the country—I'll go to South America or Australia or—"

"You'll go to a hotter climate, Buck," Ward cut in inexorably. "You've got your ticket."

"I'll own up to everything. I'll tell you where some of the money's caked we got in that Hardup deal, Ward. There's enough to put you on Easy street. I'll tell you who helped—"

"You'd better not," advised Ward harshly, "or I'll make hanging a relief to you. I know pretty well right now all you could tell. And if I wanted to send your partners up I wouldn't need your help. It's partly to give them a chance that I'm sending you out this way myself. I don't call this murder, Buck. I'm saving the state a lot of time and trouble, that's all, and your partners the black eye they'd get for throwing in with you. I heap sabe who was the head push. You got them in to take whatever dropped, so you could get off slick and clean, just as you've done before, you—"

Buck Olney got it then hot from the fires of Ward's wrath. A man does not brood over treachery and wrong and a blackened future for years without storing up a good many things that he means to say to the friend who has played him false. Ward had been a happy go lucky young fellow who had faith in men and in himself and in his future. He had lived through black, hopeless days and weeks and months because of this man who tried now to buy mercy with the faith of his partners.

In the saddle Buck sat all hunched together as if Ward had lashed him with rawhide instead of with stinging words. The muscles of his face twitched spasmodically. His eyes were growing bloodshot.

Ward spilled two papers of tobacco before he got a cigarette rolled and lighted. He wondered a little at the physical reaction from his outburst, but he wondered more at Buck Olney sitting alive and unhurt on the horse before him, a Seabuck horse which Ward had seen Floyd Carson riding once or twice. He wondered what Floyd would do if he saw Buck now and the use to which the horse was being put.

Ward finished the cigarette, rolled another and smoked that also before he could put his hand out before him and hold it reasonably steady. When he felt fairly sure of himself again he lifted his hat to wipe off the sweat of his anger, gave a big sigh and returned to the tying of the hangman's noose.

When he finally had it fixed the way he wanted it he went close and flung the noose over Buck Olney's head. He could not trust himself to speak just then. He cast an inquiring glance upward, took Buck's horse by the bridle and led him forward a few steps so that Buck was directly under the overhanging limb. Then, with the coil of Buck's rope in his hand, he turned back and squirmed up the tree trunk until he had reached the limb. He crawled out until he was over Buck's bullet punctured hat crown, sliced off what rope he did not need and flung it to the ground. He saw Buck wince as the rope went past him. The Pinto horse shied out of position.

"Take the reins and bring him back here," Ward called shortly, and gave a twitch of the rope as a hint.

Mechanically Buck obeyed. He did not know that the rope was not yet tied to the limb.

Ward tied the rope securely, leaving enough slack to keep Buck from choking prematurely. He fussed a minute longer, with his lip curled into a grin of sardonic humor. Then he crawled back to the trunk of the tree and slid down carefully so that he would not frighten the Pinto.

He went up and took the hobble off Buck Olney's feet, felt in the seam of his coat lapel and pulled out four pins, with which he fastened Buck's "pedigree" between Buck's shrinking shoulderblades. Then he stood off and surveyed his work critically before he went over to Rattler, who stood dozing in the sunshine.

"Sorry I can't stay to see you off," he told Buck maliciously. "I've decided to let you go alone and take your own time about starting. As long as that cayuse stands where he is you're safe as a church. And you've got the reins. You can kick off any time you feel like it. Sabe?" He studied Buck's horror marked face pitilessly.

"You've got about one chance in a million that you can make that Pinto stand there till some one comes along," he pointed out impartially. "I'm willing to give you that chance, such as it is. And if you're lucky enough to win out on it—well, I'd advise you to do some going. South America is about as close as you'll be safe. Folks around here are going to know all about you, old timer, whether they get to read what's on your back or not."

"And, on the other hand, it's a million to one shot you'll land where your ticket reads. I'd hate to gamble on that horse standing in one spot for two or three days, wouldn't you?" He wheeled Rattler unobtrusively, his eye on the Pinto. "I hope he don't try to follow," he said. "I want you to have a little time to think about the things I said to you. Well, so long!"

Ward rode back the way he had come, glancing frequently over his shoulder at Buck, slumped in the saddle with a paper pinned to his back like a fire warning on a tree and his own grass rope noosed about his neck and connecting him with the cottonwood limb six feet above his hat crown.

Ward had not ridden a hundred yards before he heard Buck Olney scream hysterically for help. He grinned sourly, with his eyebrows pinched to-

gether and that hard, strained look in his eyes still. "Let him holler awhile!" he grunted. "Do him good, hang him!"

Until distance and the intervening hills set a wall of silence between Ward and Buck screaming in fear of



Ward Rode Back the Way He Had Come.

death, screaming until he was so hoarse he could only whisper, screaming because he had not seen Ward take his knife and slice the rope upon the limb so that it would not have held the weight of a rabbit.

(Continued next week)

HONOR GUARD NOTES.

We have received \$1.00 from Mrs. C. D. Whitlock for the Armenian relief fund.

Honor Guard girls who assisted the Red Cross to pick oakum Monday evening were Genevieve Jure, Ruth Phelps, Florence Hickey, Louise Mattheyer and Lois Huff.

Members of corps I meet every Monday evening as usual to fold bandages at the Red Cross rooms. All girls registered in this corps must attend. When the next bale of oakum arrives we are required to attend and help pick it. Bring the boys along—they can assist materially.

In the near future the Honor Guard will take up the work of war gardening. Corn and beans, and possibly potatoes, will be the main crops. We will not confine our work to one or two large gardens in which all members are supposed to work as we did last year. This year the girls will be placed on committees, each committee to be responsible for its own plot of ground. In that way we will work to much better advantage. Donations of land and of plowing will be secured by the different committees. As nearly as possible each committee will be composed of girls in the same vicinity in which its land is located. We have received a letter from N. S. Robb, county agricultural agent, in which he gives us good advice as to home gardens, and also as to the picking of evergreen blackberries this fall. The government is already placing large orders for this berry for food for the soldiers. By picking these berries we could not only be of service to the "boys in khaki" but could also help out our local cannery, which will buy all of these berries that are offered.

RED CROSS NOTES.

The Baptist ladies' aid held a market Wednesday at Red Cross headquarters and the receipts, \$3, being given to the Red Cross. The month before a similar market was held and \$4.50 turned over to the Red Cross. The Baptist women attended in a body Wednesday and spent the afternoon sewing.

The local branch has 10 active auxiliaries.

The superfluity store has taken in \$62.50 since February 8. More donations are desired. Clothing for children between infancy and 3 or 4 years of age, canned fruit, especially a good grade of table cherries, canned peaches, peaches and pickles, all kinds of vegetables and fruits, are the things for which there is the greatest demand.

Report of Dorena Auxiliary.

The Dorena auxiliary of the American Red Cross was organized November 15, 1917, with 18 members. December 6 two more names were added, making a membership of 20. During the Christmas drive 77 new members were secured and since that time one more name has been added, making a total of 98 members.

To date the auxiliary has sent in the following completed garments: 49½ pairs of bed socks, 9 pairs wool socks; 4 hospital bed shirts, 109 wash cloths, 29 tray cloths and napkins, 9 sweaters and 40 pajama suits.

A gift of 50 cents was received February 7 from Mrs. McLin, and the Red Cross benefit Saturday night netted \$41.45.

Card of Thanks.

We wish to express our thanks and appreciation to our many friends for their expressions of love and sympathy during the illness and burial of our mother.

Miss Neva Perkins,
Mrs. Ernest Wyatt,
Mr. and Mrs. A. V. Connelly.

Sample Store Prices

—you can always compare with mail order prices and quality.

MEN'S UNION SUITS
at \$1.00 to \$2.95

MEN'S DRESS SHOES
at \$2.95 to \$6.50

MEN'S WORK SHOES
at \$2.95 to \$10.50

BOYS' SHOES
at \$2.45 to \$3.50

LADIES' DRESS SHOES
at \$4.95 to \$6.85

LADIES' HOUSE SHOES
at \$1.50 to \$1.95

LADIES' SAMPLE SHOES
at \$2.65 to \$3.65

MISSSES' DRESS SHOES
at \$1.95 to \$3.00

COTTAGE GROVE SAMPLE STORE

BANKS WILL NOT DIVULGE CUSTOMERS' BALANCES

No effort will be made to obtain information as to the amount of money anybody in Lane county may have in the banks in connection with the liberty loan drive. A report has been circulated to the effect that confidential information along this line will be obtained from the banks but this is absolutely untrue. The banks will not divulge balances or give out information of a confidential nature. Besides, a person's bank balance is not regarded as reliable information as to his ability to buy.

Spray Formula for Apple and Pear Scab

No. 1—Lime sulphur solution 1 gallon to 25 of water plus 3 pounds of iron sulphate (copperas) previously dissolved in water to each 100 gallons.

Apply when young leaves around the fruit buds are one-half to three-quarters of an inch in length.

No. 2—Lime sulphur solution 1 gallon to 35 of water plus 2 pounds of iron sulphate to each 100 gallons.

Apply just before blossom buds open.

No. 3—Lime sulphur solution 1 gallon to 40 of water plus 2 pounds of iron sulphate and 2 pounds of dry arsenate of lead to each 100 gallons. Add the iron sulphate first, then add the lead arsenate after being mixed to a thin paste. Keep well agitated.

Apply when three-fourth of the petals have fallen. Direct spray to calyx cups as well as to all foliage.

No. 4—Lime sulphur solution 1 gallon to 45 of water plus 1½ to 2 pounds of iron sulphate to each 100 gallons.

Apply 10 days or 2 weeks after No. 3.

These dilutions are intended for 30 degree lime sulphur; if stronger material is used, dilute accordingly.

If pink apple aphids are present in sufficient numbers to justify the expense, as they are in most orchards, add three-fourths of pint of nicotine sulphate (black leaf 40) to each 100 gallons of spray No. 1.

It is of utmost importance in any effort to control either apple or pear scab that all last year's leaves be plowed under, or otherwise covered, before the new leaves appear. Directions for coding moth sprays will be given when the first moths appear.

C. E. STEWART.

ATTENTION, RHYMESTERS.

The Lane County War Savings Stamps committee will give a thrift stamp daily for the best rhymed slogan or verse on the thrift stamp campaign, up to April 1, and a War Savings Stamp (value \$4.14) for the best of all substituted in the entire period. Contest open to everyone. Address J. S. Workman, Eugene.

Lane County W. S. S. Committee, m222pd
J. S. Workman, Chairman.

Card of Thanks.

I wish to thank the neighbors who gave me such kind assistance, and all the friends who showed such gracious sympathy during the sickness and after the death of my beloved wife.

CARL H. ZEIGLER.

AMONG THE CHURCHES

Methodist Church—Rev. Jas. Knotts, pastor. Sunday school at 10 a. m. Regular preaching services at 11 a. m. and 7:30. Epworth league at 7 p. m. Mid-week prayer meeting Thursday evening at 7:30.

Presbyterian Church—D. A. MacLeod, pastor. Bible school 9:45 a. m. and 7:30. Epworth league at 7 p. m. Mid-week prayer meeting Thursday evening at 7:30.

Christian Church—Walter Callison, minister. Bible school 9:45 a. m. Y. P. S. at 6:30 p. m. Preaching services at 11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m.

Baptist Church—E. G. O. Groat, pastor emeritus. Sunday school at 10 a. m. Preaching at 11 a. m. Prayer meeting Thursday evening at 7:30.

Gospel Mission—W. H. Finney and wife, leaders. Second door south of the creamery. Services Tuesday and Friday at 7:30 p. m. Sunday services at 2:30 and 7:30 p. m.

Christian Science Church—Services in the chapel at 312 Second street each Sunday at 11 a. m. Regular testimonial meeting each Wednesday at 7:30 p. m. The building is open for the use of the circulating library each Wednesday from 1:30 to 4:30 p. m. All are cordially invited to the services as well as to make use of the literature.

HERE'S PROOF

A COTTAGE GROVE CITIZEN TELLS OF HIS EXPERIENCE.

You have a right to doubt statements of people living far away but can you doubt Cottage Grove endorsement!

Read it:

F. C. Rabston, retired farmer, 447 S. Third St., says: "Whenever I have an opportunity to speak a good word for Don's Kidney Pills I do not hesitate to do so. Don's have regulated my kidneys and have overcome pains due to disordered kidneys. I have had to use them on several occasions for kidney complaint and in every instance they have never failed to give me great satisfaction."

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