

The Ranch at the Wolverine

By B. M. BOWER

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Continued from last week.

CHAPTER XIII.

Seven Lean Kine.

"AND you looked good, all up above here?" Billy Louise held Blue firmly in a curved-neck, circling stand, while she had a last word with John before she went off on one of her long rides.

"All up in the hills, and round over by Cedar creek, and all over," John's gesture was even more sweeping than his statement. "I guess mebbe them rustlers git 'em."

"Well, I'm going up to the Cove. I may not be back before dark, so don't worry if I'm late. Maybe I'll look along the river. I know one place where I believe cattle can get down to the bottom, if they're crazy enough to try it. You didn't look there, did you?"

"No, I never looked down there. I know they can't get down now."

"Well, all right; maybe they can't." Billy Louise slackened the reins, and Blue went off with short, stiff-legged jumps. It had been a long time since he had felt the weight of his lady, and his mood now was exuberant.

Blue threw up his head, lifted his heels, and ran like a scared jackrabbit over the uneven ground. They were not keeping to the trail at all; trails were too tame for them in that mood. They ran along the rim-rock at the last, where Billy Louise could glance down, now and then, at the river sliding like a bright blue ribbon with icy edges through the gray, snow-spotted hills.

"Hold on, Blue!" Billy Louise pulled up on the reins. "Quit it, you old devil! A mile ought to be enough for once. I should think. There's cattle down there in that bottom, sure as you live. And we, my dear sir, are going down there and take a look at them." She managed to pull Blue down to stiff-legged jumps and then to a walk. Finally she stopped him, so that she could the better take in her surroundings and the possibilities of getting down.

Blue had caught sight of the moving specks far down next the river and up the stream half a mile or more. He was a cow horse to the bone. He knew those fur-off specks for cattle, and he knew that his lady would like a closer look at them.

Blue chose his trail and crumpled at the knees with his hoofs on the very edge of the ledge; went down with a cut-jump and landed with all four feet planted close together. He had no mind to go on sliding in spite of himself, and the bluff was certainly steep enough to excuse a blunge.

It was with a distinct air of triumph that Blue reached the bottom, even though he slid the last forty feet on his haunches and landed belly-deep in a soft snowbank. It was with triumph to match his perky ears that Billy Louise leaned and slapped him on the neck. "We made it!" she cried, "and I didn't have to walk a step, did I, Blue? You're there with the goods, all right!"

Blue scrambled out of the bank to firm footing on the ripened grass of the bottom, and with a toss of his head set off in a swinging lope, swerving now and then to avoid a badger hole or a half-sunken rock. They had done something new, those two; they had reached a place where neither had ever been before, and Blue acted as if he knew it and gloried in the escapade quite as much as did his lady.

The cattle spied them and went trotting away up the river, and Blue quickened his stride a little and followed after. Billy Louise left the reins upon his neck. Blue could handle cattle alone quite as skillfully as with a rider, if he chose.

The cattle began to swerve away from them, closer to the river. Blue pulled ahead a little, swerving also, and as Billy Louise tightened the reins, he showed and circled them craftily until they huddled on the steep bank, uncertain which way to go. Billy Louise pulled Blue down to a walk as she drew near and eyed the cattle sharply. They did not look like any of hers, after all. There were five dry cows and two steers.

One of the steers stood broadside to Billy Louise. The brand stared out from his dingy red side, the most conspicuous thing about him. Billy Louise caught her breath. There was no faintest line that failed to drive its message into her range-trained brain. She stared and stared. Blue looked around at her inquiringly, reproachfully. Billy Louise sent him slowly forward and stirred up the huddled little bunch. She read the brand on each one; read the story they shouted at her, of bungling theft.

Finally she swung Blue on the downstream side and shouted the range cattle cry. The animals turned awkwardly and went upstream, as they had been going before Billy Louise stopped them. Blue followed watchfully after, content with the game he was playing. Where the bluffs drew close again to the river, the cattle

climbed to a narrow, shelving trail picking their way carefully along the bluff. Below them it fell sheer to the river; above them it rose steeply, a blackened jumble, save where the snow of the last storm lay drifted.

Billy Louise had never known there was a trail up this gorge. She eyed it critically and saw where boulders had been moved here and there to make its passage possible. Her lips were set close together and they still bore the imprint of her contempt.

She thought of Ward. Mentally she abused herself before him because of her doubts. How she had dared think him a thief? Her brave buckaroo! And she had dared think he would steal cattle! Her very remorse was a whip to lash her anger against the guilty. She hurried the cattle along the dangerous trail, impatient of their cautious pace.

Since she had closed up on the cattle and had read on their sides the shameful story of theft, Billy Louise had known that she would eventually come out at the lower end of the Cove; and that in spite of the fact that the Cove was not supposed to have any egress save through the gorge. What surprised her was the short distance; she had not realized that the bluff and the upland formed a wide curve, and that she had cut the distance almost in half by riding next the river.

She seemed in no doubt as to what she would do when she arrived. Billy Louise was not much given to indecision at any time. She drove the cattle into the corral farthest from the house, rode on to the stable, and stopped Blue with his nose against the fence there and with his reins dragging. Then, tight-lipped still, she walked determinedly along the path to the gate that led through the berry-jungle to the cabin.

She opened the gate and stepped through, closing it after her. She had not gone twenty feet when there was a rush from the nearest thicket, and Surbus, his hair ruffed out along his neck, growled and made a leap at her with bared fangs.

Billy Louise had forgotten about Surbus. She jumped back, startled, and the dog missed landing. When he sprang again he met a .30-caliber bullet from Billy Louise's gun and dropped back. It had been a snap shot, without any particular aiming; Billy Louise retreated a few steps farther, watching the dog suspiciously. He gathered himself slowly and prepared to spring at her again. This time Billy Louise, being on the watch for such a move, aimed carefully before she fired. Surbus dropped again, limply—a good dog forever more.

Billy Louise heard a shrill whistle and the sound of feet running. She waited, gun in hand, ready for whatever might come.

"Hey! Charlie! Somebody's come; the bell, she don't reeng." Peter Howling Dog, a pistol in his hand, came running down the path from the cabin. He saw Billy Louise and stopped abruptly, his mouth half open.

From a shed near the stable came Charlie, also running. Billy Louise waited beside the gate. He did not see her until he was close, for a tangled gooseberry bush stood between them.

"What was it, Peter? Somebody in the Cove? Or was it you?"

"No, it wasn't Peter; it was me," Billy Louise informed him calmly and ungrammatically. "I shot Surbus, that's all."

"Oh! Why, Miss Louise, you nearly gave me heart failure! How are you? I thought—"

"You thought somebody had gotten into the Cove without your knowing it. Well, somebody did. I rode up from below, along the river."

"Oh—did you? Pretty rough going, wasn't it? I didn't think it could be done. Come in; Aunt Martha will be—"

"I don't think she'll be overjoyed to see me," Billy Louise stood still beside the gooseberry bush, and she had forgotten to put away her gun. "I drove up those cattle he had down below. You're awfully careless, Charlie! I should think Peter or Marthy would have told you better. When a man steals cattle by working over the brands, it's very bad form to keep them right on his ranch in plain sight. It isn't done by the best people, you know." Her voice stung with the contempt she managed to put into it. And though she smiled, it was such a smile as one seldom saw upon the face of Billy Louise.

"What's all this? Worked brands? Why, Miss Louise, I—I wouldn't know how to—"

"I know. You did an awful punk job. A person could tell in the dark it was the work of a greenhorn. Why didn't you let Peter do it, or Marthy? You could have done a better job than that, couldn't you, Marthy?"

Poor old Marthy, with her rheumatic knees and a gray hardness in her leathery face, had come down the path and stood squarely before Billy Louise, her hands knocking her flabby hips, her hair blowing in gray, straggling wisps about her bullet head.

"Better than what? Come in, Billy Louise. I'm right glad to see ye back and lookin' so well, even if ye had 'pear to be in one of your tantrums. How's yer maw?"

Billy Louise gasped and went white. "Mommie's dead," she said. "She died the ninth." She drew another gasping breath, pulled herself together, and went on before the others could begin the set speeches of sympathy which the announcement seemed to demand.

"Never mind about that, now. I'm talking about those Seabeck cattle you folks stole. I was telling Charlie how horribly careless he is, Marthy. Did you know he let them drift down the river? And a blind man could tell a mile off the brands have been worked?"

Billy Louise's tone was positively ven-

omous in its contempt. "Why didn't you make Charlie practice on a cow-hide for a while first?" she asked Marthy cuttingly.

Marthy ignored the sarcasm. Perhaps it did not penetrate her stolid mind at all. "Charlie never worked any brands, Billy Louise," she stated with her glum directness.

"Oh, I beg his pardon, I'm sure! Did you?"

"No, I never done such a thing, neither. I don't know what you're talkin' about."

"Well, who did, then?" Billy Louise faced the old woman pitilessly.

"I do," Marthy lifted her hand and made a futile effort to tuck in a few of the longest wisps of hair.

"Well, of all the—!" The stern gray eyes of Billy Louise flew wide open at the effrontery of the words. If they expected her to believe that!

"That's it, Miss Louise. That's the point we'd like to settle, ourselves. I know it sounds outrageous, but it's a fact. Peter and I found those cattle up in the hills, with our brand worked over the V. On my word of honor, not one of us knows who did it."

"But you've got them down here—"

"Well—!" Charlie threw out a hand helplessly. His eyes met hers with appealing frankness. "We couldn't rub out the brands; what else could we do? I figured that somebody else would see them if we left them out in the hills, and it might be rather hard to convince a man; you see, we can't even convince you! But, so help me, not one of us branded those cattle, Miss Louise. I believe that whoever has been rustling stock around here deliberately tried to fix evidence against us. I'm a stranger in the country, and I don't know the game very well; I'm an easy mark."

"Yes, you're that, all right enough!" Billy Louise spoke with blunt disfavor, but her contemptuous certainty of his guilt was plainly wavering. "To go and bring stolen cattle right down here—"

"It seemed to me they'd be safer here than anywhere else," Charlie observed naively. "Nobody ever comes down here, unknown to us. I had it sized up that the fellow who worked those brands would never dream we'd bring the stock right into the Cove. Why, Miss Louise, even I would know better than to put our brand on top of Seabeck's and expect it to pass inspection. If I wanted to steal cattle, I wouldn't go at it that way!"

Billy Louise glanced uncertainly at him and then at Marthy, facing her grimly. She did not know what to think, and she showed it.

"How do you mean—the real rustlers?" she began hesitatingly; and hesitation was not by any means a mental habit with Billy Louise.

"I mean just what I said," Charlie's manner was becoming more natural, more confident. "I've been riding through the hills a good deal, and I've seen a few things. And I've an idea the fellow got a little uneasy." He saw her wince a little at the word "fellow," and he went on, with an impulsive burst of confidence: "Miss Louise, have you ever, in your riding around up above Jones canyon, in all those deep little gulches, have you ever seen anything of a—corral, up there?"

Billy Louise held herself rigidly from starting at this. She bit her lips so that it hurt. "Whereabouts is it?" she asked, without looking at him. And then: "I thought you would go to any length before you would accuse anybody."

"I would. But when they deliberately try to hand me the blame—and I'm not accusing anybody—anybody in particular, am I? The corral is at the head of a steep little canyon or gulch, back in the hills where all these bigger canyons head. Some time when you're riding that way, you keep an eye out for it. That," he added grimly, "is where Peter and I ran across those cattle; right near that corral."

The heart of Billy Louise went heavy in her chest. Was it possible? Doubts are harder to kill than cats or snakes. You think they're done for, and here they come again, crowding close so that one can see nothing else.

"Have you any idea at all, who— it is?" She forced the words out of her dry throat. She lifted her head defiantly and looked at him full, trying to read the truth from his eyes and his mouth.

Charlie Fox met her look, and in his eyes she read pity—yes, pity for her. "If I have," he said, with an air of gently deliberate evasion. "I'll wait till I am dead before I name the man. I'm not at all sure I'd do it even then, Miss Louise; not unless I was forced to do it in self-defense. That's one reason why I brought the cattle down here. I didn't want to be placed in a position where I should be compelled to fight back."

Baffled and angry and hurt to the very soul of her, Billy Louise opened the gate and went out. "If you know anything to tell, for heaven's sake don't hold back on my account! It's nothing to me, one way or the other. I'm no rustler, and no friend of rustlers, if that's what you're hinting at." She left them with a proud lift to her chin and a very straight back, went to Blue, and mounted him mechanically. Billy Louise was "seeing red" just then. She rode back past the gate, the three were still standing there close together, talking.

Billy Louise had ridden but a short distance when, with a sudden impulse born of her stern instincts of justice, she jerked Blue around and galloped back. Charlie had disappeared, and Peter Howling Dog was walking sulkingly toward the corralled cattle. Marthy was going slowly up the path to the cabin, looking old and bent and broken-spirited because of her bowed shoulders and stiff, rheumatic gait, but harsh and unyielding as to her face. Billy Louise's tone was positively ven-

called to her. Marthy turned, stared at her sourly, and stood where she was.

"Wall, what d'yuh want now?" she asked uncompromisingly.

Billy Louise fought back an answering antagonism. She must be just; she could not blame Marthy for feeling hard toward her. She had insulted them horribly and killed Marthy's dog. "I want to tell you I'm sorry I was so mean, Marthy," she said bravely. "I haven't any excuse to make for it; only you must see yourself what a shock it would be to a person to find those cattle down here. But I know you're honest, and so is Charlie. And I know you'd do what's right. I'm sorry I shot your dog, Marthy."

Apologies did not come easily to Billy Louise. She wheeled then and rode away at a furious gallop, before Marthy could do more than open her grim lips for reply.

(Continued next week)

COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS.

April 1.—Council met in regular session, roll was called and all councilmen were found to be present with the exception of John Vetch. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved.

Treasurer's report was read and ordered filed.

On motion Honor Guard girls were granted permission to use the triangular tract in front of the old Sears property on Sixth street for a war garden and free use of water for the season.

The following bills were ordered paid: C. G. Transfer Co., cleaning sets \$ 24.25
C. G. Transfer Co., hauling hose 1.00
C. G. Electric Co., lights for 23.83
March 28, 1918, salary and exp. 75.45
J. E. Young, salary 55.00
W. W. Oglesby, salary 10.96
S. H. McKernan, salary 72.50
G. G. Warner, work on water 4.50
Fire company salaries 24.00
W. B. Osmon, work on streets 11.00
Frank Woodruff, work on sewer 1.00
J. E. YOUNG, City Recorder.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at Roseburg, Oregon, February 26, 1918.

Notice is hereby given that Frank B. Chenoweth, of Oakridge, Oregon, who, on August 23, 1910, made Homestead Entry, Serial No. 96546, for 160 acres in unsurveyed Sec. 36, Tp. 20 S. R. 3 E. W. M., described by metes and bounds as follows: Beginning at Cor. No. 1, identical with Corner of Secs. 25, 26, 35 and 36, of Tp. 20 S. R. 3 E. W. M.; thence N. 89° 51' E. 59.29 chs.; thence S. 29.16 chs.; thence W. 39.23 chs.; thence S. 20.45 chs.; thence N. 89° 57' W., 19.99 chs.; thence N. 0° 12' W., 40.45 chs., to place of beginning, has filed notice of intention to make final five-year proof to establish claim to the land above described, before E. O. Immel, U. S. Commissioner, at his office at Eugene, Ore., on the 20th day of April, 1918.

Claimant names as witnesses: C. M. Dunning, of Oakridge, Oregon; R. M. Holt, of Oakridge, Oregon; J. H. Chenoweth, of Oakridge, Oregon; Will Hebert, of Oakridge, Oregon.

W. H. CANON, Register.

NOTICE OF SHERIFF'S SALE ON EXECUTION.

Notice is hereby given that by virtue of an execution and order of sale issued out of the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon, for Lane County, on the 14th day of March, 1918, and by me received the 14th day of March, 1918, in an action wherein O. L. Nichols was plaintiff and George L. Mote and Madge Mote, his wife, M. S. Currier and Lillian Currier, his wife, and D. H. Brumbaugh and Juda Brumbaugh were defendants, on the 13th day of March, 1918, in the above entitled court the plaintiff, O. L. Nichols, recovered judgment against the defendants, George L. and Madge Mote, for the sum of \$385.49, with interest at the rate of 8 per cent per annum from the 13th day of March, 1918, together with costs amounting to fifty and no-100 dollars attorney's fees and fifteen and 20-100 dollars costs and disbursements, which judgment was enrolled and docketed in the office of the Clerk of said Court on the 13th day of March, 1918, and said execution to me directed commanding me in the name of the State of Oregon, in order to satisfy said judgment, costs and accruing costs, to sell the following described real property, to-wit:

Beginning at the southwest corner of the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 7, Township 21 south of Range 2 west of Willamette Meridian, run thence east 45 rods to the center of Brumbaugh river thence down the center of said Brumbaugh river to the north line of the southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of said Section 7 at a point 35 rods east of the northwest corner of said southwest quarter of southwest quarter of said Section 7; thence west 35 rods and south to the place of beginning, containing 20 acres of land, excepting herefrom a 12-foot right of way across said premises for an irrigation ditch.

Now, therefore, in the name of the State of Oregon and in compliance with said execution and in order to satisfy said judgment, costs and accruing costs, I will on Saturday, the 27th day of April, 1918, between the hours of 9 o'clock a. m. and 4 o'clock p. m., to-wit: at one o'clock p. m. on said day at the southwest door of the county courthouse in Eugene, Lane County, Oregon, offer for sale for cash, subject to redemption, all the right, title and interest of the above named defendants in and to the above described real property.

D. A. ELKINS, Sheriff of Lane County, Oregon.

NOTICE OF FINAL SETTLEMENT.

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned, executor of the estate of Lena Lurch, deceased, has filed in the County Court for Lane County, Oregon, his final account as executor of said estate on the Saturday, the 11th day of May, 1918, at the hour of 11 o'clock a. m. of said day has been set by the County Court as the time hearing objections to said final account.

BENJAMIN LURCH, Executor of the estate of Lena Lurch, deceased.

ADMINISTRATOR'S NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that by order of the county court of Lane County, Oregon, duly made and entered of record on the 30th day of March, 1918, in the matter of the estate of James Henry Derby, deceased, the undersigned, Alta King, was duly appointed administrator of said estate. All persons having claims against said estate are required to present them duly verified as by law required to said administrator at his law office in the First National Bank building, Cottage Grove, Oregon, within six months from the date of this notice.

Dated this 5th day of April, 1918.

ALTA KING, Administrator.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

Notice is hereby given that by an order of the county court of Lane county, Oregon, made and entered of record on the 27th day of March, 1918, in the matter of the estate of Lydia E. Hickey, deceased, the undersigned was duly appointed administrator of said estate. All persons having claims against said estate are hereby required to present the same, duly verified, to the undersigned at the law offices of Potter & Immel in Eugene, Oregon, within six months from the date of this notice.

Dated this 5th day of April, 1918.

STANLEY HICKEY, Administrator of the estate of Lydia E. Hickey, deceased.

POTTER & IMMEL, Attorneys for Estate.

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NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

Department of the Interior, U. S. Land Office at Roseburg, Oregon, March 27, 1918.

Notice is hereby given that Samantha Clevinger, widow of John Clevinger deceased, of R. 3, Box 205 Salem, Oregon, who, on November 30, 1912, made homestead entry serial No. 98443 for the W 1/2 of NW 1/4 and SE 1/4 of NW 1/4 of section 34, township 20 S., range 6 W., Willamette meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final three-year proof to establish claim to the land above described, before the register and receiver of the United States land office at Roseburg, Oregon, on the 13th day of May, 1918.

Claimant names as witnesses: Arthur Woolley, of Gunter, Oregon; Fred E. Clark, of Gunter, Oregon; J. O. Gunter, of Gunter, Oregon; George Woolley, of Gunter, Oregon.

W. H. CANON, Register.

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D. A. ELKINS, Sheriff of Lane County, Oregon.



The boys give all—you get paid for what you lend—invest in the Third Liberty Loan.

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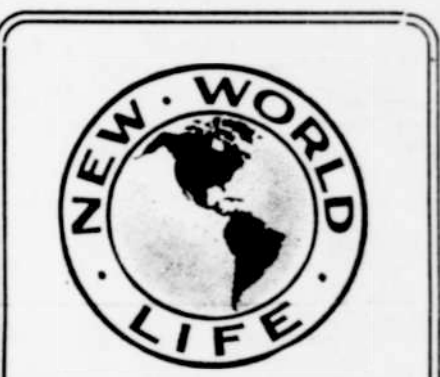
FRED G. STICKELS
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NOTICE TO CREDITORS.

In the matter of the estate of Richard B. Woolley, deceased.

Notice is hereby given that Martha A. Woolley has been by the County Court of the State of Oregon and for Lane County, appointed executrix of the estate of Richard B. Woolley, deceased, and that all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased are hereby notified to present the same, duly verified as by law requires, at the law office of H. J. Shinn, in Cottage Grove, Lane County, Oregon, within six months from the first publication of this notice, to-wit: within six months from the 12th day of April, A. D. 1918. MARTHA J. WOOLLEY, Executrix.

H. J. SHINN, her attorney a12-m10