



The Free Traders

By Victor Rousseau

CHAPTER I

Sergeant Anderson Rides Into Little Falls

Lee Anderson, sergeant in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, had been leading his horse up the last hill. Now he stopped at the top and lit his pipe, letting the annual match a few blades of the sparse grass that grew among the ferns and raspberry brambles beside the cart track.

There were, perhaps, thirty-three or four years to his credit. His rather lined, deeply sunburned face and throat contrasted markedly with the edging of white flesh at the V-top of his open shirt. Lee, in his prospective's clothing, appeared to be typically one of those reserved, quiet, self-contained men whom the north breeds.

His rather heavy horse, a combination of pack and saddle, was well laden behind the rolled blankets that formed a parapet across its shoulders.

Lee inhaled with delight the warm, steamy exhalations of the earth, rich with the added debris of the year. He turned and looked forward, beyond the settlement of Little Falls, lying at the foot of the slope in front of him, the last of the settlements on his side of Stony range.

It was an unkempt, untidy little place, created by the advent of the lumber companies a few years before, and struggling among the knee-high stumps of what had been virgin forest within the decade.

After his belated return from France, only to find the old Northwest mounted, of which he had been a member, merged in the new Dominion body. Lee himself had been stationed at Manistee. He had been in the police eight years before the war. It was the only life that appealed to him. His service had expired during his term at the front, but his first act on returning had been to rejoin.

Inspector Crawley had sent for him a few days later.

"Anderson," he said, "I want you to be ready to start for Stony range in the morning to pick up a man named Pelly. He's on the list of 'wanted'—headed if for some time, in fact. I guess you don't know anything about the case, though."

"No, sir. It must have happened while I was in France."

"Oh, it happened a decade or a time before you went to France, Anderson. Twenty-five years ago, more or less. Might have left the poor devil alone, especially as he's been a fugitive so long. But it's murder, Sergeant, and—well, the new police have got to show themselves just as efficient blood hounds as the old force. The papers in the case have just come through Ottawa."

"This man Pelly appears to have killed a man in Toronto in the nineties for insulting his wife. The details are not given. It appears a tip came down some time ago that Pelly has been living in the Stony range, on the other side of Stony range, for a good many years. Pelly appears to have got wind of this and made a quick getaway. Now the word's come in that he's been seen in the district. May be true or false."

"Probably it won't be possible to convict now. If it is possible, I don't suppose he'll get much of a sentence. But headquarters are anxious that we should establish our prestige by getting after him—to show that we're on the job as our predecessors were. I want you to ride in, and, if he's with you, pick him up and bring him back with you."

Anderson saluted. He was about to leave the office when the inspector called him back.

"Stop a moment, Sergeant. You can guess that this man Pelly was probably betrayed by someone with a grudge against him. I suppose you know that the Free Traders opened up at Stony lake during the war?"

The Free Traders, as Anderson knew, were a gang of liquor men, organized from Montreal, and sending its agents far and wide into the Indian lands, debauching and corrupting. The Free Traders dealt in human souls as well as far and whiskey; they were the most iniquitous thing that had so far entered the northern territories.

"There's a man named Jim Rathway who seems to be handling their work for 'em up there. Ten to one his gang's mixed up with this Pelly matter in some way. Perhaps they're out for Pelly's head because he wouldn't stand in with 'em. On the other hand there's the chance that he's in with 'em and someone else tipped us off. In that case you'll find yourself up against the organization."

"This Rathway's believed to have been running liquor under various aliases for years, and there's a rumor about happenings at an Indian camp in the Far North, where the Free Traders have another post at Lake Misquah. They've got to be a big factor during the years of the war—so big that we're not going to tackle 'em until we're ready to launch a general campaign against 'em."

"You'll remember not to butt in if you find 'em selling liquor, but pick

up Pelly as quietly as possible, and take notes, if you get the chance, on what's going on at Stony lake.

"You've got carte blanche, and you'll take a covering warrant from the stipendiary to use in any way you see fit. And take all the time you want."



And Now at Last—the Range Lay in Front of Him, Uplifting its Wild Peaks into the Glory of the Autumn Sunsets.

because there'll be nothing doing till spring. But don't let 'em get wise to your job. So you'll leave your uniform behind you, Sergeant, and conduct your inquiries as inconspicuously as possible. And in a case like this one man's better than two. That's why I'm sending you alone.

"Finally, you'll bear in mind that Pelly's arrest comes first. Soon as you locate him, bring him out of the range."

At dawn Lee was upon the road.

There had been rumors—recurrent rumors of a gold find in Stony range that summer, but the nearer Lee got to the range the less explicit the news became.

He passed a number of men on their way south, morose and sullen but ready enough to pour out their grievance that a summer's prospecting had failed to show even a trace of color anywhere.

Lee had listened to their stories and then gone on, leaving the impression that he was a prospector on a belated journey to the range.

And now at last the range lay in front of him, uplifting its wild peaks into the glory of the autumn sunset. Lee felt his heart uplifted too. This was life at its most zestful—the world spaces, and the hunting of the king of all created beings—Man.

So, leading his horse, Lee passed down the long slope toward the settlement of Little Falls. Soon he was abreast of the first shacks, set in the clearings among the stumps. That came rows of uniformly ugly wooden cottages, a small mission church with a tin roof, a bank, and a small hotel announcing itself by a dilapidated shingle.

Lee fastened his horse to the hitching post in front and entered. On the right of the interior passage was the dining-room, on the left the parlor with the furniture piled up in corners and the floor strewn with duffie bags and blankets.

A passage ran past a flight of rickety stairs, and from a room at the end of this came the clamor of voices.

Here Lee found the bar, packed tight, and running wide open. Behind the mahogany stood a fat and cynical-looking landlord.

"How about a room and stability for the night?" asked Lee.

The landlord slid a schooner of beer from one end of the bar to the middle and turned to Lee, his fat body quivering, apparently with mirth though his face did not relax any thing of its solemn, cynical aspect.

"Stability? You said it. Room? You c'n have six foot by four of the parlor floor, stranger," he answered.

"Fretty full, eh?"

"Fulle'r 'n b-'s full of fire-logs."

"Logging crews signing up?"

"Loggin', nothin'. Town's full of these here fool guys that's been prospecting Stony range all summer. Got cold feet all to onct and all quit to gether. Feeling pretty sore over it, I guess. Ya ain't aiming to start for the range yerself this time of year?"

"I guess there'll be time to wash a few pans of dirt," answered Lee.

"Then maybe I'll heard," answered Lee.

He had his horse into the stable-gave it some corn and raked out a bale of hay, and carried his blanket back to the hotel parlor, where he staked out a sleeping claim upon the floor.

A small negro boy, carrying a large

bell, came out of the kitchen and began to ring it, swaying to and fro with a cheerful grin, as if he were tied to the clapper.

At the sound of the cracked tones the men began to struggle out of the bar into the dining-room, where they took their seats on long benches either side of a long table covered with a stained, tattered oilcloth, on which were placed cheap knives, forks, spoons and plates.

Next appeared a thick-set young neek who began to hand out portions of a greasy dinner, consisting of suspicious meat, beans, and potatoes that had apparently been frozen to death in bed.

Lee, who had taken a seat opposite the door, surveyed the other guests with that quiet watchfulness which was a part of his nature as well as of his training. For the most part he summed them up as being of the average prospector type.

Among them, however, appeared to be a few of those hard-bitten characters who are to be found in every gold rush. Most of them had been drink hard, and all seemed embittered by their experiences of the summer. They were freely cursing their ill luck.

Lee's attention was first drawn to the two men who were seated opposite him by the fact that they took no part in this chorus of denunciation. A glance showed him that they were not prospectors, and that the understanding between them was an intimate one.

One was a short, thick-set, muscular, red-haired man, with one of the hard set and most repulsive faces that Lee had ever seen. The other, apparently his partner, was a huge half-breed with a great muscular torso covered with black hair, and long gorilla-like arms.

"If I had that guy here what started that yarn about the gold in Stony range," began a man on Lee's right.

"Ah, for the love of Mike, cut out that spiel, Bill!" shouted another across the table. "D'you think you're the only real fool's been summerin' in the range?"

"Old Pelly never found no gold mine. He was cracked about it. If he had wouldn't others have got wise to it with half the district hangin' about the range sprin' on him?"

"Nobody knows what happened to him, do they?"

"Just disappeared. Maybe he had a stroke in the woods or something. No body's seen nor heard of him this go while past."

Lee absorbed this conversation without feeling that he had got very far. Pelly had discovered a probable mineral gold mine. Pelly had disappeared; it began to seem probable that the report of his return was false. If these men had been prospecting the range all the summer, it was probable that if Pelly had returned to the vicinity they would have heard of it. In which case someone

(Continued next week.)

LEGUME CULTURES ARE USED WIDELY

Legume cultures prepared by the bacteriology department of the experiment station are being sent to farmers in Oregon, California, Nevada, North Dakota, and neighboring states. One order was received from Mexico last week for bacteria to inoculate 40 acres of garden peas.

Cultures sufficient to inoculate 7000 acres to legumes were sent out by the experiment station last year. The heaviest demands are from Oregon farmers. Out of state orders come largely from O. A. C. alumni and other state experiment stations.

The cultures are used in inoculating clover, alfalfa, vetch, beans, peas, and other legume crops. They contain bacteria which have the faculty of taking the nitrogen of the air and making that nitrogen available for crop use. The legume crops will not grow with any degree of success unless these bacteria are present.

Bacteria for the particular type of legume indicated are put up in two-acre size bottles, which are sent post paid for 50 cents each. This makes the cost only 25 cents an acre for the culture.

Field peas for hay should be planted from February 15 to April 4. White Canadian, Blue Prussian, or Arthur varieties are drilled three-fourths to two inches deep, at the rate of 90 to 120 pounds an acre. Where they are a new crop they should be inoculated.

The cutting of scion wood of deciduous trees should be delayed for a short time until the damage done in Oregon by the severe cold of this winter has been determined. The advice of the O. A. C. experiment station. This scion wood should be cut before the last of February.

HOLEY WEDLOCK
He—Send our home life will be ideal. I will come home at evening and we will sit by the fire—I'll read the paper and— you can darn socks.

Sweet Thing—Oh, be sure that is one of the first things I am going to teach you.

MIGHT AS WELL
She—Our neighbor has borrowed all our books.

He—Send him over the book-case.

REFORMS IN STATE SUPERVISION OF BANKS AS ADVOCATED BY BANKERS

By FRANK W. SIMMONDS
American Bankers Association

ALTHOUGH many states have unexcelled systems of bank supervision by public authority, in some instances dangerous entanglements have resulted in lax methods and perilous practices. Public opinion today demands that bank supervision be as free from partisan interference as the judiciary itself.

State banking laws are increasing in number and diversity. Much thought and study has been given by the State Bank Division of the American Bankers Association to uniformly efficient supervision. It is on record as urging that the office of Bank Commissioner be freed from entangling politics and divorced from all other functions of state government; that the tenure of office be made more secure and lasting, with sufficient compensation and discretionary power to attract men of outstanding executive ability and successful banking experience, and that bank examiners be selected from those having the requisite qualifications.

A careful study and survey of state bank supervision has been made with the cooperation of State Bank Commissioners and state bankers to bring out the high lights of successful supervision, and at the same time indicate remediable weaknesses, as the basis for formulating a model code of law dealing with bank supervision, and also for developing public opinion in favor of its general adoption.

This survey shows that in forty-one states Bank Commissioners are appointed by the governor and generally hold office "during their pleasure." In two states they are chosen by popular election, in others they are chosen by a banking board, but in only a few is the advice of organized banking considered. In Mississippi the selection is made by a convention of delegates from the state chartered banks.

Long Terms Make Bureaucrats
The term of office was found to range from two years to six. The majority of recommendations favor a five-year term, reasoning that a long term of life tenure tended toward bureaucracy in office, while a short term was condemned on the grounds that the Bank Commissioner would scarcely have time to become thoroughly conversant with his field of work before the expiration of his term of service and the public would lose the fruits of his experience. A five-year term is long enough to permit his rendering useful service through capitalizing his experience and then if he is found capable the chances of his reappointment would be strong.

It was found that duties other than bank supervision are frequently imposed on the banking department, ranging from insurance matters to irrigation projects and even state mail insurance. The almost unanimous expression of opinion is that the position of bank commissioner is a task of such outstanding importance as to demand that he devote all his time and attention strictly to problems of bank supervision and regulation.

Some states impose no statutory qualifications whatever for Bank Commissioner. A number merely require that he have nominal qualifications, in many cases purely negative.

Changes Needed
The consensus as to changes needed to strengthen the work of the state banking departments is summarized in the following recommendations:

1. Provide adequate salaries.
 2. Give Bank Commissioner large discretionary power in granting charters and enforcing bank regulations.
 3. Remove the office from partisan politics by providing for election or nomination of the Commissioners by the bankers.
 4. Provide for a sufficient number of examiners, with adequate pay, and free their appointment from politics.
 5. Give the Banking Department full authority to act as receiver in the case of failed banks.
 6. Make Bank Commissioners' terms five years.
 7. Make requirements for Bank Commissioner eligibility not less than five years of successful banking experience and well recognized executive ability.
- Bank supervision, when wisely and impartially administered, is capable of rendering one of the highest types of service a state can give its people.

WE PRINT BUTTER WRAPPERS

Beaver Chapter No. 106 O. E. S., regular meeting Wednesday evening Feb. 25, at 8 P. M. Social. Visitors welcome. By order of the Worthy Matron, Jessie G. Pharis, Secretary. Adv. et t

SLAM!
Bang—I'm never afraid to tell a man anything, because it goes in one ear and out at the other.

Slam—Yes; but if you tell a woman anything, it goes in at both ears and out at the mouth.

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CHICK DISEASE INFECTS LARGELY IN EARLY LIFE

White diarrhea infects the greatest number of baby chicks within the first 48 to 72 hours after hatching. From 2 to 4 per cent of the chicks infected at birth will cause the disease to spread to 40, 50, or even 75 per cent of the entire flock. Hatchery operators and farmers, in an effort to save a high percentage of the chicks, often leave infected chicks in the incubator and try to doctor them. The result of this practice is usually disastrous.

The best and only satisfactory way of handling chicks that show symptoms of white diarrhea is to remove them from the incubator and kill them. Every "pasty" chick should be killed as soon as it is discovered. Any chick that develops symptoms of the disease in the first 48 to 72 hours should be removed and killed. The killed birds should be burned to eliminate the possibility of further infection.

Infected hens do not always show outward signs of the infection but they do lay eggs carrying the disease. Chicks hatched from such eggs are infected at birth. Trying to save lives of infected chicks ends in sorrow at some later date. Getting rid of infected hens is getting rid of infected chicks to a large extent.

The O. A. C. Experiment Station recommends the use of hatching eggs from blood tested stock as the first step in preventing the spread of white diarrhea. If hatching eggs from

an unknown flock are used disinfecting the incubator and the brooder house helps in hindering the spread of the disease.

Failure to provide the correct brooder temperature for small chicks often results in bowel trouble. From 95 degrees to 100, at the edge of the hover, is the correct temperature for the first few days. Too much heat is as bad as not enough. Confining the chicks fairly close to the stove the first two days by means of boards twelve ins. wide nailed together at the corners, minimize the danger of chilling.

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HER NEW HAT
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Phil—Yes, I understand when friend husband saw it he fetched a lot of language.

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