Rhodes Eugene Manlove

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Eugene Rhodes
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Содержание

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There are two sorts of people – those who point with pride and those who view with alarm. They are quite right. The world will not soon forget Parkman "of Ours." Here was a man of learning, common sense, judgment and wide sympathies. Yet once he stumbled; the paregorical imperative, which impels each of us to utter ignominious nonsense, urged Francis Parkman to the like unhappiness, drove him to father and put forth this void and singular statement:

> I have often perplexed myself to divine the various motives that give impulse to this strange migration; but whatever they may be, whether an insane hope of a better condition of life, or a desire of shaking off the restraints of law and society, or mere restlessness, certain it is that multitudes bitterly repent the journey.

The year was 1846; the place, Independence, in Missouri; that strange migration was the winning of the West. Mr. Parkman viewed it with alarm. The passage quoted may yet be found in the first chapter of "The Oregon Trail." We, wise after the event, now point with pride to that strange migration of our fathers.

The Great Trek has lasted three hundred years. To-day we dimly perceive that the history of America is the story of the pioneer; that on our shifting frontiers the race has been hammered and tempered to a cutting edge.

That insane hope of better things – the same which beckoned on the Israelites and the Pilgrim Fathers; restraints of law and society, which in Egypt made the Israelite a slave, in England gave the Puritan to the pillory and the stocks, and in this western world of ours took the form of a hollow squire, founder by letters patent of a landed oligarchy – so that the bold and venturesome sought homes in the unsquired wilderness; and restlessness, that quality which marks the most notable difference between man and sandstone. Restlessness, shaking off restraints, insane hopes – in that cadence of ideas what is there of haunting, echolike and familiar? Restraints of society? When the very stones of the streets shrieked at him the name of that town – Independence! Now we know the words that haunted us: "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness!" Never was echo clearer. The emigrants were there in exercise of those unavoidable rights. Not happiness, or the overtaking of happiness; the pursuit of happiness – the insane hope of a better condition of life.

That which perplexed Parkman looked upon, disapproving, was the settlement of America – the greatest upbuilding of recorded time; and the prime motive of that great migration was the motive of all migrations – the search for food and land. They went west for food. What they did there was to work; if you

require a monument – take a good look!

Here is the record of a few late camp fires of the Great Trek.

I

"Why-Why had been principally beaten about the face, and his injuries, therefore, were slight."
– The Romance of the First Radical.

"A fine face, marred by an expression of unscrupulous integrity."
– Credit Lost.

The lady listened with fluttering attention. The lady was sweet and twenty, and the narrator – myself – was spurred to greater effort. Suddenly a thought struck her. It was a severe blow. She sat up straight, she stiffened her lips to primness, her fine eyes darkened with suspicion, her voice crisped to stern inquiry.

"I suppose, when Sunday came, you kept right on working?"

It was an acid supposition. Her dear little nose squinched to express some strong emotion – loving-kindness, perhaps; her dear little upper lip curled ominous. She looked as though she might bite.

"Kept right on working is right. We had to keep on working," I explained. "We couldn't very well work six days gathering cattle and then turn them all loose again on the seventh day – could we now?"

The lady frowned. The lady sniffed. She was not one to be turned aside by subterfuge. She leaned forward to strike, and

flattened her brows in scorn. She looked uncommonly like a rattlesnake. She said:

"I suppose you couldn't put them in the barn-yards?"

And I learned about readers from her.

Cattle were once grazed to the nearest railroad – say, a thousand miles – yes, and beyond that railroad to Wyoming grass; or Montana. No one who saw those great herds forgot them or ever quite refrained from speech of those stirring days, to children or grandchildren. That is why so many think – not unnaturally – that range cattle were always held under herd. But it is a mistaken impression. Cattle do not thrive under herd.

Cattle on the free range – everybody's cattle – were turned loose and mixed together. There were no fences except as deep rivers counted for such; the Panama Canal was yet undug. Twice a year, in spring and fall, everybody gets together to work the cattle at the rodeo, or round-up. They brand the calves; they take into the day herd all strays, all steers or cows to be shipped, and nothing more. From cattle gathered each day steers and strays are cut out and thrown into the day herd; all the others, the range cattle, are turned loose with a vigorous shove in that direction most remote from to-morrow's round-up.

Again, your ranch was that land to which you had either title or claim; its purpose was to give a water right on stream or lake or to hold spring, well or tank. But your range was either Texas land or Uncle Sam's land as far as your cattle would range from your various water rights – say, twenty-five miles in each direction.

Your range was that country where you were reasonably sure your cattle would not be stolen by strangers.

Here was the way of the Bar Cross round-up; with slight variations it was the way of any round-up. The Bar Cross Company, running the biggest brand on the Jornada range, supplied one foreman, one straw boss, three top hands and the captain of the day herd; one horse wrangler, who herded the saddle horses by day; one night wrangler, who herded them by night; and mounts for these eight. The Bar Cross also furnished one red-headed cook; one chuck wagon and the chuck – chuck being grub – and one bed wagon to haul bed rolls from camp to camp, and also to haul wood and water between times. Item: Four mules for the chuck wagon, and two for the bed wagon. The night wrangler drove the bed wagon; night wranglers were not supposed to sleep.

Other ranchmen, co-users of the Bar Cross range, sent each a man and his mount to represent. A man with many cattle might send two or more men; the 7 T X – next to the Bar Cross the biggest brand on the Jornada – sent four. Each man or each two men brought tarp and bedding on a pack horse.

From north, south, east and west came the stray men, each with mount and bed. Stray men stayed with the outfit as long as it pleased them. When they were satisfied they cut out from the day herd their own cattle, together with those of their neighbors, and drove them home. As a usual thing, three or four would throw in and drive back together. If by chance some man was homeward

bound and alone, the Bar Cross detailed a man to help him home; a friendly and not imprudent custom.

To sum up: The Bar Cross paid nine men, and provided good grub for all comers; in return it had the help of twenty-five to forty men in working the range; the rodeo, or round-up.

During the weeks or months of that working, wherever some other outfit gave a round-up – east, west, south or north – there, with mount and bed, went either a Bar Cross man or one from some other brand of the Jornada people, bringing back all Jornada cattle.

A word about horses. In the fall, when grass was green and good, a mount was eight to thirteen head. One must be gentle; he was night horse; every man stood guard at night two and a half to three hours; all night in case of storm. For the others, the best were cutting horses, used afternoons, when the day's drive was worked; the poorest were circle horses and were ridden in the forenoon, when the round-up was made. But in the spring it is different. Grass is scant and short; corn is fed, and four horses go to a mount; the range is worked lightly.

So much was needful by way of glossary and guide; so partly to avoid such handicap as we meet in telling a baseball story to an Englishman.

It is a singular thing that with the Bar Cross were found the top ropers, crack riders, sure shots – not only the slickest cowmen, but also the wisest cow ponies. Our foremen were "cowmen right," our wranglers held the horses, our cooks would fry

anything once. But you know how it is – your own organization – firm, farm or factory – is doubtless the best of its kind. No? You surprise me. You have missed much – faith in others, hope for others, comradeship.

It is laughable to recall that men of other brands disputed the headship of the Bar Cross. Nor was this jest or bravado; the poor fellows were sincere enough. Indeed, we thought this pathetic loyalty rather admirable than otherwise. Such were the 101, in Colorado; the X I T, in the Panhandle; the Block and the V V, between the Pecos and the Front Range; the Bar W, west of the White Mountain; the V Cross T, the John Cross, the Diamond A and the L C, west of the Rio Grande. Even from Arizona, the T L, the Toltec Company – Little Colorado River way – put forth absurd pretensions.

The Bar Cross men smiled, knowing what they knew. That sure knowledge was the foundation of the gay and holdfast spirit they brought to confront importunate life. No man wanted to be the weak link of that strong chain; each brought to his meanest task the earnestness that is remarked upon when Mr. Ty Cobb slides into second base; they bent every energy on the thing they did at the joyful time of doing it. In this way only is developed that rare quality to which the scientific give the name of pep or punch. Being snappy made them happy, and being happy made them snappy; establishing what is known to philosophers as the virtuous circle. The nearest parallel is newspaper circulation, which means more advertising, which boosts circulation, and so

onward and upward.

In that high eagerness of absorption, a man "working for the brand" did not, could not, center all thoughts on self; he trusted his fellows, counted upon them, joyed in their deeds. And to forget self in the thought of others is for so long to reach life at its highest.

The Bar Cross had worked the northern half of the range, getting back to Engle, the center and the one shipping point of the Jornada, with fifteen hundred steers – finding there no cars available, no prospect of cars for ten days to come. To take those steers to the south and back meant that they would be so gaunted as to be unfit for shipment.

So the wagon led on softly, drifting down to the river, to a beating of *bosques* for outlaw cattle and a combing of half-forgotten ridges and pockets behind Christobal Mountain. It was a work which because of its difficulty had been shirked for years; the river cattle mostly came out on the plains in the rainy season, and got their just deserts there. Waiting for cars, the outfit was marking time anyhow. Any cattle snared on the river were pure gain. The main point was to handle the stock tenderly. From working the *bosques* the outfit expected few cattle and got less. – The poets babble about the bosky dell; *bosque*, literally translated, means "woods." Yet for this purpose if you understand the word as "jungle," you will be the less misled.

Johnny Dines sat tailor-wise on his horse at the crest of a sandy knoll and looked down at the day herd, spread out over a

square mile of tableland, and now mostly asleep in the brooding heat of afternoon. About the herd other riders, six in all, stood at attention, black silhouettes, or paced softly to turn back would-be stragglers.

Of these riders Neighbor Jones alone was a Bar Cross man. He was captain of the day herd, a fixture; for him reluctant straymen were detailed in turn, day by day, as day herders. Johnny represented a number of small brands in the north end of the Black Range. His face was sparkling, all alive; he was short, slender, black-haired, black-eyed, two and twenty. He saw – Neighbor Jones himself not sooner – what turmoil rose startling from a lower bench to riverward; a riot of wild cattle with riders as wild on lead and swing and point. As a usual thing, the day's catch comes sedately to the day herd; but this day's catch was *bosque* cattle – renegades and desperates of a dozen brands.

Jody Weir, on Johnny's right, sat on the sand in the shadow of his horses. This was not ethical; seeing him, Yoast and Ralston, leading the riot, turned that way, drew aside to right and left, and so loosed the charging hurricane directly at the culprit.

Weir scrambled to saddle and spurred from under. The other riders closed in on the day herd, stirring them up the better to check the outlaws. Half of the round-up crew followed Yoast to the right of the now roused and bellowing day herd, bunching them; the others followed Ralston on Johnny's side of the herd.

Cole Ralston was the Bar Cross foreman. Overtaking Johnny, he raised a finger; the two drew rein and let the others pass by.

Cole spoke to the last man.

"Spike, when they quiet down you ride round and tell all these day-herder waddies that if any of 'em want to write letters they can slip in to the wagon. I'm sending a man to town soon after supper."

He turned to Johnny, laughing.

"Them outcasts was sure snaky. We near wasted the whole bunch. Had to string 'em out and let 'em run so they thought they was getting away or they'd ha' broke back into the brush."

"Two bull fights started already," observed Johnny. "Your Sunday-School bulls are hunting up the wild ones, just a-snuffin'."

"The boys will keep 'em a-moving," said Cole. "Dines, you ride your own horses, so I reckon you're not drawing pay from the ninety-seven piney-woods brands you're lookin' out for. Just turning their cattle in a neighborly way?"

"Someone had to come."

"Well, then," said Cole, "how would you like a Bar Cross mount?"

Slow red tinged the olive of Johnny's cheek, betraying the quickened heartbeats.

"You've done hired a hand – quick as ever I throw these cattle back home."

"Wouldn't Walter Hearn cut out your milk-pen brands as close as you would?"

"Sure! He's one of the bunch."

"Your pay started this morning, then. Here's the lay. To-morrow we work the herd and start the west-bound strays home. Walt can throw in with the S S Bar man and I'll send Lon along to represent the Bar Cross. Hiram goes to the John Cross work, at the same time helpin' Pink throw back the John Cross stuff. So that leaves us shy a short man. That's you. Send your horses home with Walt."

"I'd like to keep one with me for my private."

"All right. Leave him at the horse camp. Can't carry any idlers with the *caballada*– makes the other horses discontented. You drift into the wagon early, when you see the horse herd coming. I'm goin' to send you to the horse camp to get you a mount. We'll cut out all the lame ones and sore backs from our mounts too. I'll give you a list of fresh ones to bring back for us. You go up to Engle after supper and then slip out to Moongate to-morrow. We'll be loadin' 'em at Engle when you get back. No hurry; take your time."

He rode on. Behind him the most joyous heart between two oceans thumped at Johnny's ribs. It is likely that you see no cause for pride. You see a hard job for a scanty wage; to Johnny Dines it was accolade and shoulder stroke. Johnny's life so far had been made up all of hardships well borne. But that was what Johnny did not know or dream; to-day, hailed man-grown, he thought of his honors, prince and peer, not as deserved and earned, but as an unmerited stroke of good fortune.

The herd, suddenly roused, became vociferous with query and

rumor; drifted uneasily a little, muttered, whispered, tittered, fell quiet again, to cheerful grazing. The fresh wild cattle, nearing the periphery, glimpsed the dreaded horsemen beyond, and turned again to hiding in the center. Cole and most of his riders drew away and paced soberly campward, leaving ten herders where they found six.

Jody Weir rode over to Johnny.

"Old citizen," he said, "the rod tells me you are for Engle, and if I wanted to send letters I might go write 'em. But I beat him to it. Letter to my girl all written and ready. All I had to do was to put in a line with my little old pencil, telling her we'd work the herd to-morrow and start home next day. She'll be one pleased girl; she sure does love her little Jody."

Johnny knotted his brows in puzzlement. "But who reads your letters to her?" he said wonderingly.

"Now what you doin' – tryin' to slur my girl? She's educated, that child is."

"No; but when you said she – she liked her little Jody – why, I naturally supposed" – Johnny hesitated – "her eyesight, you know, might be – "

Weir slapped his leg and guffawed.

"Thought she was blind, did you? Well, she ain't. If she was I wouldn't be writing this letter. Most of it is heap private and confidential." His face took on a broad and knowing leer as he handed over the letter. It was fat; it was face up; it bore the address:

Mr. J. D. Weir, Hillsboro, N. M

Johnny put the letter carefully in his saddle pocket.

"Don't you think maybe you're leaving an opening for some of the cattle to slip out?" he said, twitching his thumb toward Weir's deserted post.

"Let them other waddies circulate a little – lazy dogs! Won't hurt 'em any. Cattle ain't troublin', nohow. Cole, he told me himself to slide over and give you my letters. Darned funny if a man can't gas a little once in a while." He gave Johnny a black look. "Say, feller! Maybe you don't like my talk?"

"No," said Johnny, "I don't. Not unless you change the subject. That young lady wouldn't want you to be talking her over with any tough you meet."

Jody Weir checked his horse and regarded Dines with a truculent stare. "Aw, hell! She ain't so particular! Here, let me show you the stuff she writes, herself." His hand went to his vest pocket. "Some baby!"

"Here! That's enough! I'm surprised at you, Jody. I never was plumb foolish about you, but I suhtenly thought you was man enough not to kiss and tell. That's as low-down as they ever get, I reckon."

"You ain't got no gun. And you're too little for me to maul round – say nothing of scaring the herd and maybe wasting a lot."

"All that is very true – to-day. But it isn't a question of guns,

just now. I'm trying to get you to shut up that big blackguard mouth of yours. If you wasn't such a numskull you'd see that I'm a-doin' you a good turn."

"You little sawed-off, bench-legged pup! I orter throw this gun away and stomp you into the sand! Aw, what's a-bitin' you? I ain't named no names, have I? You're crowdin' me purty hard. What's the matter, feller? Got it in for me, and usin' this as an excuse? When'd I ever do you any dirt?"

"Never," said Johnny. "Get this straight: I'm not wanting any fight. It's decency I'm trying to crowd on to you – not a fight."

"I can't write to my girl without your say-so, hey?"

"Now you listen! Writing to a girl, fair and above-board, is one thing. Writing unbeknownst to her folks, with loose talk about her on the side, is another thing altogether. It's yourself you're doing dirt to – and to this girl that trusted you."

Jody's face showed real bewilderment. "How? You don't know her name. Nobody knows her name. No one knows I have more than a nodding acquaintance with her – unless she told you!" His eyes flamed with sudden suspicion. "You know her yourself – she told you!"

"Jody, you put me in mind of the stealthy hippopotamus, and likewise of the six-toed Wallipaloova bird, that hides himself under his wing," said Dines. "I've never been in Hillsboro, and I never saw your girl. But when you write her a letter addressed to yourself – why don't your dad take that letter home and keep it till you come? How is she going to get it out of the post office?

She can't – unless she works in the post office herself. Old man Seiber is postmaster at Hillsboro. I've heard that much. And he's got a daughter named Kitty. You see now I was telling you true – you talk too much."

Weir's face went scarlet with rage.

"Here's a fine how-de-do about a damn little – "

That word was never uttered. Johnny's horse, with rein and knee and spur to guide and goad, reared high and flung sidewise. White hoofs flashed above Weir's startled eyes; Johnny launched himself through the air straight at Jody's throat. Johnny's horse fell crashing after, twisting, bestriding at once the other horse and the two locked and straining men. Weir's horse floundered and went down, men and horses rolled together in the sand. From first to last you might have counted – one – two – three – four! Johnny came clear of the tangle with Jody's six-shooter in his hand. He grabbed Jody by the collar and dragged him from under the struggling horses.

"We can't go on with this, Jody!" he said gravely. "You've got no gun!"

II

"She is useful to us, undoubtedly,' answered Corneuse, 'but she does us an injury by ruining us.'"
– The Elm Tree on the Mall.

The Jornada is a high desert of tableland, east of the Rio Grande. In design it is strikingly like a billiard table; forty-five miles by ninety, with mountain ranges for rail at east and west, broken highlands on the south, a lava bed on the north. At the middle of each rail and at each corner, for pockets, there is a mountain passway and water; there are peaks and landmarks for each diamond on the rail; for the center and for each spot there is a railroad station and water – Lava, Engle and Upham. Roughly speaking there is road or trail from each spot to each pocket, each spot to each spot, each pocket to every other pocket. In the center, where you put the pin at pin pool, stands Engle.

Noon of the next day found Johnny nearing Moongate Pass, a deep notch in the San Andreas Mountains; a smooth semicircle exactly filled and fitted by the rising moon, when full and seen from Engle. Through Moongate led the wagon road, branching at the high parks on the summit to five springs: The Bar Cross horse camp, Bear Den, Rosebud, Good Fortune, Grapevine.

Johnny drove his casualties slowly up the gentle valley. On either hand a black-cedared ridge climbed eastward, each to a

high black mountain at the head of the pass. Johnny gathered up what saddle horses were in the pass and moved them along with his cripples.

At the summit he came to a great gateway country of parks and cedar mottes, gentle slopes and low rolling ridges, with wide smooth valleys falling away to north and south; eastward rose a barrier of red-sandstone hills. High in those red hills Johnny saw two horsemen. They drove a bunch of horses of their own; they rode swiftly down a winding backbone to intercept him. He held up his little herd; the two riders slowed up in response. They came through a greenwood archway to the little cove where Johnny waited. One was a boy of sixteen, Bob Gifford, left in charge of the horse camp; the other a tall stranger who held up his hand in salute. Young Bob reined up with a gay flourish.

"Hello, Dinesy!" He took a swift survey of Johnny's little herd and sized up the situation. "Looks like you done signed up with the Bar Cross."

"Oh, *si*! Here's a list of horses Cole sent for. I don't know 'em all, so I brought along all I saw."

Bob took the scrap of paper.

"Calabaza, Jug, Silver Dick – Oh, excuse me! Mr. Hales, this is Johnny Dines. Mr. Hales is thinkin' some of buying that ornery Spot horse of mine. Johnny, you got nigh all you need to make good your hospital list. Now let's see. Um-m! – Twilight, Cyclone, Dynamite, Rebel, Sif Sam, Cigarette, Skyrocket, Straight-edge, and so forth. Um! Your mount, that

bunch? Sweet spirits of nitre! Oh, cowboy! You sure got to ride!"

"Last man takes the leavings," said Johnny.

"You got 'em." Bob rolled his eyes eloquently. "I'll tell a man! Two sticks and eleven catawampouses! Well, it's your funeral. Any rush?"

"Just so I get back to Engle to-morrow night."

"Easy as silk, then. All them you ain't got here will be in to water to-night or to-morrow morning, 'cept Bluebeard and Popcorn. They run at Puddingstone Tanks, down the cañon. You and me will go get 'em after dinner."

"Dinner? Let's go! Got any beef, Bobby?"

"Better'n beef. Bear meat-jerked. Make hair grow on your chest. Ever eat any?"

"Bear meat? Who killed a bear?"

"Me. Little Bobby. All alone. Three of 'em. Killed three in the yard the very first morning," said little Bobby proudly. "I heard them snuffin' and millin' round out in the water pen in the night, but I thought it was stock. Then they come up in the house yard. Soon as it come day I got up to drive 'em out – and behold you, they was no stock, but three whoppin' brown bears. So I fogged 'em. Killed all three before they could get out of the yard."

"Good Lord!" said Johnny. His face drooped to troubled lines. The man Hales glanced sharply at him.

"Heap big chief me!" prattled Bobby, unnoting. "Two bully good skins – had to shoot the last one all to rags to kill him – and twelve hundred pounds of good meat. Wah!" He turned to

the stranger. “Well, Mr. Hales, do you think that little old plug of mine will suit you?”

“Oh, I reckon so. Beggars mustn’t be choosers – and I sure need him. Thirty dollars, you said?”

“Wouldn’t take a cent more. I’m not gougin’ you. That’s his price, weekdays or Sunday. He don’t look much, but he ain’t such a bad little hoss.”

Hales nodded. “He’ll do, I guess.”

“You done bought a horse!” said Bobby. “And Johnny, he’s got a mount to make him a rep – if they don’t spill him.” He broke into rollicking song:

> They picked me up and carried me in;
> They rubbed me down with a rolling pin.
> “Oh, that’s the way we all begin,
> You’re doing well,” says Brown;
> “To-morrow morn, if you don’t die,
> I’ll give you another horse to try.”
> “Oh, can’t you let me walk?” says I —

Here he cocked an impish eye at Dines, observed that gentleman’s mournful face, and broke the song short.

“What’s the matter with you now, Dinesy? You can ride ’em, of course. No trouble after you first take the edge off.”

“It isn’t that,” said Dines sorrowfully. “I – I – you ain’t a bit to blame, but – ”

He stopped, embarrassed.

"What's the matter, you old fool? Spill it!"

Johnny sighed and drew in a long breath.

"I hate to name it, Bob – I do so. Hiram Yoast and Foamy White, the blamed old fools, they orter told you! They'll be all broke up about this." He looked Bob square in the eye and plunged on desperately. "Them bears, Bobby – Hiram and Foamy had been makin' pets of 'em. Feedin' them beef bones and such ever since last spring – had 'em plumb gentle."

"Hell and damnation!"

Johnny's eyes were candid and compassionate. "Anybody would have done just the same, Bobby. Don't you feel too bad about it. Rotten durned shame, though. Them bears was a bushel o' fun. Jack and Jill, the two biggest ones, they was a leetle mite standoffish and inclined to play it safe. But the Prodigal Son, that's the least one – growed a heap since last spring with plenty to eat that way – why, the Prodigal he'd never met up with any man but Foamy and Hi, so he wasn't a mite leery. Regular clown, that bear. Stand up right in front of the door, and catch biscuit and truck the boys threw to him – loll out his little red tongue and grin like a house afire. He was right comical. How he did love molasses!"

"How come them fools didn't tell me?" demanded the crestfallen hunter, almost in tears.

"Pretty tough luck," said Hales commiseratingly. "I killed a pet deer once. I know just how you feel."

"I don't know who's to break it to Hiram and Foamy," said

Johnny, grieving. “It’s goin’ to hurt ’em, bad! They set a heap of store by them bears – ’special the Prodigal – poor little fellow! I feel right bad myself, and I was only here two nights. Make it all the worse for them, being all on account of their cussed carelessness. I can’t see how you’re a bit to blame. Only I do think you might have noticed your night horse didn’t make any fuss. Usual, horses are scared stiff of bears. But they’d got plumb used to these.”

“Didn’t keep up no horse that night,” said Bob miserably.

“Look here!” said Hales. “What’s the use of letting them other fellows know anything about it? Mr. Dines and me, we won’t tell. This young man can send his bearskins over east, Tularosa or somewhere, and keep his lip buttoned up. No one need be ever the wiser. Bears change their range whenever they get good and ready. Nobody need know but what they just took a notion to light out.”

“Say, that’s the right idea!” said Johnny, brightening. “That’ll save a heap of trouble. Boys are liable to think the round-up scared ’em out – as might happen, easy. That ain’t all either. That plan will not only save Hi and Foamy a heap o’ grief, but it won’t be no bad thing for Bob Gifford. I’ll tell you honest, Bob – the Bar Cross will near devil the life out of you if this thing ever gets out.”

“That’s good dope, kid,” said Hales kindly. “No use cryin’ over spilt milk.”

“Let’s drop it then. I’ll get rid of the bear hides.”

"That's right. Talkin' about it only makes you feel bad. Forget it. Here, I'll give you something else to think about. You two seem to be all right."

Hales drew rein, with a long appraising look at the younger man. It seemed to satisfy him; he rode a little to one side, facing a wooded sugar-loaf hill in the middle of the rough gap leading east to Rosebud. He waved his hand. A crackling of brush made instant answer; high above them a horseman came from cover and picked his way down the steep hill.

"Friend of mine," explained Hales, returning. "He is sort of watering at night, just now. No hanging matter – but he wouldn't have showed up unless I waved him the O. K. And he is sure one hungry man. It's for him I bought the horse."

Johnny reflected a little. This was no new or startling procedure. Besides being the most lonesome spot in a thinly settled country, with a desert on each side, and with Engle, thirty miles, for next neighbor, the horse camp had other advantages. It was situated in the Panhandle of Socorro County; a long, thin strip of rough mountain, two townships wide and five long, with Sierra County west, Dona Ana to the south, Lincoln and Otero on the east; a convenient juxtaposition in certain contingencies. Many gentlemen came uncommunicative to the horse camp and departed unquestioned. In such case the tradition of hospitality required the host to ride afield against the parting time; so being enabled to say truly that he knew not the direction of his guest's departure. Word was passed on; the Panhandle became well and

widely known; we all know what the lame dog did to the doctor.

But Johnny rubbed his nose. This thing had been done with needless ostentation; and Johnny did not like Mr. Hales' face. It was a furtive face; the angles of the eyes did not quite match, so that the eyes seemed to keep watch of each other; moreover, they were squinched little eyes, and set too close to the nose; the nose was too thin and was pinched to a covert sneer, aided therein by a sullen mouth under heavy mustaches. Altogether Mr. Hales did not look like a man overgiven to trustfulness. Johnny did not see any reason why Mr. Hales' friend should not have ridden in later and with more reticence; so he set himself to watch for such reason.

"My friend, Mr. Smith," announced Hales, as Mr. Smith joined them. Mr. Smith, like the others, wore belt and six-shooter; also, a rifle was strapped under his knee. He was a short and heavy-set man, singularly carefree of appearance, and he now inquired with great earnestness: "Anybody mention grub?"

"Sure," said Bobby. "Let's drift! Only a mile or so."

We all went to the ranch next day;
Brown augured me most all the way;
He said cowpunching was only play,
There was no work at all.
"All you have to do is ride,
It's just like drifting with the tide – "
Lord have mercy, how he lied!
He had a most horrible gall!

The walling hills were higher now. The cañon fell away swiftly to downward plunge, gravel between cut banks. Just above the horse camp it made a sharp double-S curve. Riding across a short cut of shoulder, Bob, in the lead, held up a hand to check the others. He rode up on a little platform to the right, from which, as pedestal, rose a great hill of red sandstone, square-topped and incredibly steep. Bobby waved his hat; a man on foot appeared on the crest of the red hill and zigzagged down the steeps. He wore a steeple-crowned hat and he carried a long rifle in the crook of his arm.

Johnny's eyes widened. He exchanged a glance with Hales; and he observed that Smith and Hales did not look at each other. Yet they had – so Johnny thought – one brief glance coming to them, under the circumstances.

Hales pitched his voice low.

"You was lying about them bears, of course?"

"Got to keep boys in their place," said Johnny in the same guarded undertone. "If them bears had really been pets do you suppose I'd ever have opened my head about it?"

"It went down easy." Hales grinned his admiration. "You taken one chance though – about his night horse."

"Not being scared, you mean? Well, he hasn't mentioned any horse having a fit. And I reckoned maybe he hadn't kept up any night horse. Really nothing much for him to do. Except cooking."

"He does seem to have a right smart of company," agreed

Hales.

Bob returned with the last comer – a gaunt, brown man with a gift for silence.

"My friend, Mr. Jones," Bob explained gravely. "He stakes his horse on that hilltop. Bully grass there. And quiet. He likes quiet. He doesn't care for strangers a-tall – not unless I stand good for 'em."

The camp – a single room, some fourteen feet by eighteen, flat roofed, made of stone with a soapstone fireplace – was built in a fenced yard on a little low red flat, looped about by the cañon, pleasant with shady cedars, overhung by a red and mighty mountain at the back, faced by a mightier mountain of white limestone. The spring gushed out at the contact of red and white.

The bunch of saddle horses was shut up in the water pen. Preparation for dinner went forward merrily, not without favorable comment from Mr. Smith for Bob's three bearskins, a proud carpet on the floor. Mr. Jones had seen them before; Hales and Johnny kept honorable silence on that theme. Hales and Mr. Smith set a good example by removing belt and gun; an example followed by Bob, but by neither Johnny nor Mr. Jones. The latter gentleman indeed had leaned his rifle in the corner beyond the table. But while the discussion of bearskins was most animated, Johnny caught Mr. Jones' eye, and arched a brow. Johnny next took occasion to roll his own eye slowly at the unconscious backs of Mr. Hales and Mr. Smith – and then transferred his gaze, very pointedly, to the long rifle in the corner. Shortly after, Mr. Jones

rose and took a seat behind the table, with the long rifle at his right hand.

"Well, Mr. Bob," said Hales when dinner was over, "here's your thirty dollars. You give Smith a bill of sale and get your pardner to witness it. Me, I'm telling you good-by. I'm due to lead Smith's discard pony about forty mile north to-night, and set him loose about daylight – up near the White Oaks stage road. Thank'ee kindly. Good-by, all!"

"Wait a minute, Toad," said Smith briskly. "I'll catch up my new cayuse and side you a little ways. Stake him out in good grass, some quiet place – like my pardner here." He grinned at Mr. Jones, who smiled, attentive. "I'll hang my saddle in a tree and hoof it back about dark. Safe enough here – all good fellows. And I sure like that bear meat. To say nothing of being full up of myself for society."

"We'll do the dishes," said Johnny. "Bob, you rope me up the gentlest of my hyenas and we'll slip down to Puddingstone presently."

"Well, good luck to you, Mr. Dines," said Hales at the door.

"So long."

"That horse you've got staked out, Mr. Jones," said Johnny, when the others were catching horses, "how about him? I've got a private horse out in the water pen. Shall we swap? Saddles too? You're a little the biggest, but you can let out my stirrups a notch, and I can take up a notch in yours, up on that pinnacle when I go for my new horse and come back – about dark. That way, you

might ride down the cañon with Bob. I think maybe – if it was important – Bob might not find the horses he wants, and might lay out to-night. And you might tell him you was coming back to camp. But you can always change your mind, you know. 'All you have to do is ride.'"

"This is right clever of you, young man," said Jones slowly.

"It sure is. Your saddle any good?"

"Better'n yours. Enough better to make up for the difference in hosses, unless yours is a jo-darter. My hoss is tired."

"He'll have all fall to rest up. We'd better trade hats, too. Somebody might be watchin' from the hills."

"Them fellows?" Jones motioned toward the water pen with the plate he was drying.

"Scouts, I guess. Decoy ducks. More men close, I judge. Acted like it. You ought to know."

"It ain't noways customary to send two men after me," said Jones.

Johnny nodded. "You don't know about Smithy yet. Let me wise you up." He outlined the trustfulness of Smithy. "So he was all labeled up for an outlaw, like a sandwich man. Putting one over on Bobby – him being a boy. Bobby fell for it. And me, just a big kid myself, what show did I have with two big grown men smooth as all that? So they fooled me, too. Smithy said 'Toad' once – notice? Toad Hales. I've heard of Toad Hales. Socorro way. Big mitt man, once. Skunk – but no fighting fool. Out for the dollar."

"He sees some several. You're takin' right smart of a chance, young fellow."

"I guess I've got a right to swap horses if I want to. Hark! They're ridin' up the cañon."

"Well, suh, I'm right obliged to you, and that's a fact."

"I'm not doing this for you exactly. I'm protectin' the Bar Cross. And that's funny, too," said Johnny. "I've just barely signed up with the outfit, and right off things begin to take place in great lumps and gobs. More action in two days than I've seen before in two years. Here's how I look at it: If anyone sees fit to ride up on you and gather you on the square I've got nothing to say. But I hold no candle to treachery. You're here under trust. I owe it to the Bar Cross – and to you – that you leave here no worse off than you came. I don't know what you've done. If it's mean enough, I may owe it to Johnny Dines to go after you myself later on. But you go safe from here first. That's my job."

"And I'll bet you'd sure come a-snuffin'. I judge you're a right white man, suh! But it's not so mean as all that, this time. Not even a case of 'alive or dead.' Just 'for arrest and conviction.' So I guess you'll be reasonably safe on the hillside. No money in killing you, or me, or whoever brings my hoss off of that hill. And they'll be counting on gathering you in easy – asleep here, likely."

"That's the way I figured it – that last."

"But how'll you square yourself with the sheriff?"

"I'll contrive to make strap and buckle meet some way. Man

dear, I've got to!"

"Well, then – I owe you a day in harvest. Good-by, suh. Jones, he pulls his freight."

Johnny brought his new horse and saddle down from the red hill, unmolested. He cut out what horses he wanted to keep in the branding pen; turned the others loose, his new acquisition with them; and started supper. Mr. Smith joined him at dark; but the horse hunters did not get back. Supper followed, then seven-up and conversation. Johnny fretted over the non-return of Gifford.

"He talked as if he knew right where to lay his hand on them horses," he complained. "Wish I had gone myself. Now in the morning I'll have to be out of here at daylight. That bunch I got in the pen, I got to take them out to grass, and wait till Bob comes – if the blame little fool sleeps out to-night."

"Oh, he'll be in purty quick, likely."

"I don't know," said Johnny dejectedly. "I had to-morrow all figured out like a timetable, and here it's all gummed up. Listen. What's that in the yard – crunchin'? Varmints, likely. When I was here last we used to throw out beef bones, and of nights we'd shoot through the doorway at the noise. We got eight skunks and three coyotes and a fox and a tub. Guess I'll try a shot now." He picked up his revolver and cocked it.

"Hello, the house!" said a hurried voice outside.

"Why, it's a man!" said Johnny. He turned his gun upon Mr. Smith. "One word and you're done," he whispered. His eye was convincing. Smith petrified. Johnny raised his voice. "Hello,

outside! You come near getting shot for a skunk! If you want supper and shelter say please and walk out loud like a man. I don't like your pussy-foot ways."

"Come out of there – one at a time – hands up!" said the voice. "We've got you surrounded. You can't get away!"

"On the contrary, we are behind thick walls, and you can get away if you're right quick and immediate," said Johnny. "Inside of a minute I'm going to empty a rifle out there on general principles. This is a Bar Cross house. I am a Bar Cross man, where I belong, following orders. Half a minute more!"

"You fool! This is the sheriff's posse!"

"I hear you say it."

"I am the sheriff of Socorro County," said another voice, "and I summon you to surrender."

"I am a Bar Cross man in a Bar Cross house," repeated Johnny. "If you're the sheriff, walk in that door on your hind legs, with your hands up, and let us have a look at you."

"That's Johnny Dines talking!" said a third voice. "Hello, Dines! This is me, Bill Fewell! Say, this is the sheriff and his posse all right! Don't you get in wrong."

"One man may unbuckle his belt and back in at that door, hands up. If you can show any papers for me, I surrender. While I give 'em the quick look, the man that comes in is a hostage with my gun between his shoulder blades. If he takes his hands down or anybody tries any funny business, I'll make a sieve of him. Step lively!"

"Dines, you fool," bawled the sheriff, "I got nothing against you. But I've got a warrant for that man in there with you, and I'm going to have him."

"Oh!" A moment's silence. Then said Johnny, in an injured voice: "You might ha' said so before. I've got him covered and I've taken his gun. So now I've got one gun for him and one for the hostage. Send in one man walking backward, hands up, warrant in his belt – and let him stop right in the door! No mistakes. If the warrant is right you get your man. Any reward?"

"He's a stiff-necked piece," said Fewell. "But he'll do just what he says. Here, give me your warrant. He won't hurt me – if you fellows hold steady. If you don't, you've murdered me, that's all. Hey, Dines! You stubborn long-eared Missouri mule, I'm coming, as per instructions – me, Bill Fewell. You be careful!"

He backed up and stood framed in the open door against the lamplight. Johnny's hand flickered out and snatched the warrant.

"Why, sheriff, this seems to be all right. Only he gave me a different name. But then, he naturally would. Why, this warrant is all shipshape. Hope I get some of that reward. Here's your man, and here are my guns." He appeared at the door and tossed his guns down. The sheriff crowded by, and broke into a bellow of rage.

"You fool! You blundering idiot! This is one of my posse!"

"What?" Johnny's jaw dropped in pained surprise. "He's a liar, then. He told me he was an outlaw. Don't blame me!"

"You hell-sent half-wit! Where's that other man – Jones?"

"Oh, him? He's down the cañon, sir. He went with Bob after horses. He hasn't got back yet, sir."

"Dines, you scoundrel! Are you trying to make a fool out of me?"

"Oh, no, sir! Impossible. Not at all, sir. If you and your posse will take cover, sir, I'll capture him for you when he comes back, just as I did this one, sir. We are always glad to use the Bar Cross house as a trap and the Bar Cross grub for bait. As you see, sir."

"Damn you, Dines, that man isn't coming back!"

Johnny considered this for a little. Then he looked up with innocent eyes.

"Perhaps you are right, sir," he said thoughtfully.

Long since, the floods have washed out the Bar Cross horse camp, torn away pens and flat and house, leaving from hill to hill a desolate wash of gravel and boulders – so that no man may say where that poor room stood. Yet youth housed there and hope, honor and courage and loyalty; there are those who are glad it shall shelter no meaner thing.

III

"I do believe there shall be a winter yet in heaven – and in hell."
– Paradise and the Periscope.

"Realism, n. The art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads."
– The Devil's Dictionary.

"They sit brooding on a garbage scow and tell us how bad the world smells."
– Berton Braley.

"Just round the block" is a phrase familiar to you. To get the same effect in the open country you would say "thirty miles" or sixty; and in those miles it is likely there would be no water and no house – perhaps not any tree. Consider now: Within the borders of New Mexico might be poured New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware. Then drop in another small state and all of Chesapeake Bay, and still New Mexico would not be brimful – though it would have to be carried carefully to avoid slopping over. Scattered across this country is a population less than that of Buffalo – half of it clustered in six-mile ribbons along the Rio Grande and the Pecos. Those figures are for to-day. Divide them by three, and then excuse the story if it steps round the block. It was long ago; Plancus was consul then.

Some two weeks after the day when Johnny Dines went to horse camp, Charlie See rode northward through the golden September; northward from Rincon, pocket of that billiard table you know of. His way was east of the Rio Grande, in the desperate twisting country where the river cuts through Caballo Mountains. His home was beyond the river, below Rincon, behind Cerro Roblado and Selden Hill; and he rode for a reason he had. Not for the first time; at every farm and clearing he was hailed with greeting and jest.

Across the river he saw the yellow walls of Colorado, of old Fort Thorne, deserted Santa Barbara. He came abreast of them, left them behind, came to Wit's End, where the river gnaws at the long bare ridges and the wagon road clings and clambers along the brown hillside. He rode sidewise and swaying, crooning a gay little saddle song; to which Stargazer, his horse, twitched back an inquiring ear.

Oh, there was a crooked man and he rode a crooked mile—

Charlie See was as straight as his own rifle; it was the road he traveled which prompted that joyful saddle song. As will be found upon examination, that roistering ditty sorts with a joyful jog trot. It follows that Charlie See was not riding at a run, as frontiersmen do in the movies. It is a great and neglected truth that frontiersmen on the frontier never ride like the frontiersmen in films. And it may be mentioned in passing that frontiersmen

on frontiers never do anything at all resembling as to motive, method or result those things which frontiersmen do in films. And that is the truth.

The actual facts are quite simple and jolly. In pursuit of wild stock, men run their horses at top speed for as short a time as may be contrived; not to make the wild stock run faster and farther, but to hold up the wild stock. Once checked, they proceed as soberly as may be to the day's destination; eventually to a market. Horse or steer comes to market in good shape or bad, as the handling has been reckless or tender; and the best cowman is he whose herds have been moved slowest. At exceptional times – riding with or from the sheriff, to get a doctor, or, for a young man in April, riding a fresh horse for a known and measured distance, speed is permitted. But the rule is to ride slowly and sedately, holding swiftness in reserve for need. Walk, running walk, pace, jog trot – those are the road gaits, to which horses are carefully trained, giving most mileage with least effort. Rack and single-foot are tolerated but frowningly.

The mad, glad gallop is reserved for childhood and for emergencies. Penalties, progressively suitable, are provided for the mad, glad galloper. He becomes the object of sidelong glances and meaning smiles; persistent, he becomes the theme of gibe and jest to flay the skin. If he be such a one as would neither observe nor forecast, one who will neither learn nor be taught, soon or late he finds himself set afoot with a give-out horse; say, twenty-five miles from water. It is not on record that

wise or foolish, after one such experience, is ever partial to the sprightly gallop as a road gait. Of thirst, as of "eloquent, just and mightie Death," it may be truly said: "Whom none could advise, thou hast perswaded."

The road wound down to the bottom land for a little space. Then sang Charlie See:

> Oh, mind you not in yonder town
> When the red wine you were fillin',
> You drank a health to the ladies round
> And slighted Barbara Allan?

Followed a merry ditty of old days:

> Foot in the stirrup and a hand on the horn,
> Best old cowboy ever was born!
> Hi, yi-yippy, yippy-hi-yi-yi,
> Hi-yi-yippy-yippy-yay!
>
> Stray in the herd and the boss said kill it,
> Shot him in the ear with the handle of the skillet!
> Hi, yi-yippy, yippy-hi-yi-yi,
> Hi-yi-yippy-yippy-yay!

That rollicking chorus died away. The wagon road turned up a sandy draw for a long detour, to cross the high ridges far inland. Stargazer clambered up the Drunkard's Mile, a steep and dizzy cut-off. High on an overhang of halfway shelf, between water

and sky, Stargazer paused for breathing space.

> The world has no place for a dreamer of dreams,
> Then 'tis no place for me, it seems,
> Dearie!.. My dearie!

Echo rang bugle-brave from cliff to cliff, pealed exulting, answered again – came back long after, faint and far:

"Dearie!.. My dearie!"

He looked down, musing, at the swirling black waters far below.

> For I dream of you all day long!
> You run through the hours like a song!
> Nothing's worth while save dreams of you,
> And you can make every dream come true —
> Dearie! My dearie!

Drunkard's Mile fell off into the valley at Redbrush and joined the wagon road there. They passed Beck's Ferry and Beneteau's; they came to a bridge over the *acequia madre*, the mother ditch, wide and deep. Beyond was a wide valley of cleared and irrigated farm lands. This was Garfield settlement.

You remember Mr. Dick and how he could not keep King Charles' head out of his Memorial? A like unhappiness is mine. When I remember that pleasant settlement as it really was, cheerful and busy and merry, I am forced to think how gleefully

the super-sophisticated Sons of Light would fall afoul of these friendly folk – how they would pounce upon them with jeering laughter, scoff at their simple joys and fears; set down, with heavy and hateful satisfaction, every lack and longing; flout at each brave makeshift, such as Little Miss Brag crowed over, jubilant, when she pointed with pride:

> For little Miss Brag, she lays much stress
> On the privileges of a gingham dress —
> A-ha-a! O-ho-o!

A lump comes to my throat, remembering; now my way is plain; if I would not be incomparably base, I must speak up for my own people. Now, like Mr. Dick, I must fly my kite, with these scraps and tags of Memorial. The string is long, and if the kite flies high it may take the facts a long way; the winds must bear them as they will.

Consider now the spreading gospel of despair, and marvel at the power of words – noises in the air, marks upon paper. Let us wonder to see how little wit is needed to twist and distort truth that it may set forth a lie. A tumblebug zest, a nose pinched to sneering, a slurring tongue – with no more equipment you and I could draw a picture of Garfield as it is done in the fashion of to-day.

Be blind and deaf to help and hope, gay courage, hardship nobly borne; appeal to envy, greed, covetousness; belaud extravagance and luxury; magnify every drawback; exclaim at

rude homes, simple dress, plain food, manners not copied from imitators of Europe's idlesse; use ever the mean and mocking word – how easy to belittle! Behold Garfield – barbarous, uncouth, dreary, desolate, savage and forlorn; there misery kennels, huddled between jungle and moaning waste; there, lout and boor crouch in their wretched hovels! We have left out little; only the peace of mighty mountains far and splendid, a gallant sun and the illimitable sky, tingling and eager life, and the invincible spirit of man.

Such picture as this of Garfield *comme il faut* is, I humbly conceive, what a great man, who trod earth bravely, had in mind when he wondered at "the spectral unreality of realistic books." It is what he forswore in his up-summing: "And the true realism is … to find out where joy resides and give it a voice beyond singing."

This trouble about Charles the First and our head – it started in 1645, I think – needs looking into.

There are circles where "adventurer" is a term of reproach, where "romance" is made synonym for a lie, and a silly lie at that. Curious! The very kernel and meaning of romance is the overcoming of difficulties or a manly constancy of striving; a strong play pushed home or defeat well borne. And it would be hard to find a man but found his own life a breathless adventure, brief and hard, with ups and downs enough, strivings through all defeats.

Interesting, if true. But can we prove this? Certainly – by

trying. Mr. Dick sets us all right. Put any man to talk of what he knows best – corn, coal or lumber – and hear matters throbbing with the entrancing interest born only of first-hand knowledge. Our pessimists "suspect nothing but what they do not understand, and they suspect everything" – as was said of the commission set to judge the regicides who cut off the head of Charles the Martyr – whom I may have mentioned, perhaps.

Let the dullest man tell of the thing he knows at first hand, and his speech shall tingle with battle and luck and loss, purr for small comforts of cakes and ale or sound the bell note of clean mirth; his voice shall exult with pride of work, tingle and tense to speak of hard-won steeps, the burden and heat of the day and "the bright face of danger"; it shall be soft as quiet water to tell of shadows where winds loiter, of moon magic and far-off suns, friendship and fire and song. There will be more, too, which he may not say, having no words. We prate of little things, each to each; but we fall silent before love and death.

It was once commonly understood that it is not good for a man to whine. Only of late has it been discovered that a thinker is superficial and shallow unless he whines; that no man is wise unless he views with alarm. Eager propaganda has disseminated the glad news that everything is going to the demnition bowwows. Willing hands pass on the word. The method is simple. They write very long books in which they set down the evil on the one side – and nothing on the other. That is "realism." Whatsoever things are false, whatsoever things are dishonest, whatsoever

things are unjust, whatsoever things are impure, whatsoever things are of ill report; if there be any vice, and if there be any shame – they think on these things. They gloat upon these things; they wallow in these things.

The next time you hanker for a gripping, stinging, roaring romance, try the story of Eddystone Lighthouse. There wasn't a realist on the job – they couldn't stand the gaff. For any tough lay like this of Winstanley's dream you want a gang of idealists – the impractical kind. It is not a dismal story; it is a long record of trouble, delay, setbacks, exposure, hardship, death and danger, failure, humiliation, jeers, disaster and ruin. Crippled idealists were common in Plymouth Harbor. The sea and the wind mocked their labor; they were crushed, frozen and drowned; but they built Eddystone Light! And men in other harbors took heart again to build great lights against night and storm; the world over, realists fare safelier on the sea for Winstanley's dream.

There is the great distinction between realism and reality: It is the business of a realist to preach how man is mastered by circumstances; it is the business of a man to prove that he will be damned first.

You may note this curious fact of dismal books – that you remember no passage to quote to your friends. Not one. And you perceive, with lively astonishment, that despairing books are written by the fortunate. The homespun are not so easily discouraged. When crows pull up their corn they do not quarrel with Creation. They comment on the crows, and plant more corn.

This trouble in King Charles' head may be explained, in part, on a closer looking. As for those who announce the bankruptcy of an insolvent and wildcat universe, with no extradition, and who proclaim God the Great Absconder – they are mostly of the emerged tenth. Their lips do curl with scorn; and what they scorn most is work – and doers. For what they deign to praise – observe, sir, for yourself, what they uphold, directly or by implication. See if it be not a thing compact of graces possible only to idleness. See if it be not their great and fatal mistake that they regard culture as an end in itself, and not as a means for service. Aristocracy? Patricians? In a world which has known the tinker of Bedford, the druggist's clerk of Edmonton, the Stratford poacher, backwoods Lincoln, a thousand others, and ten thousand – a carpenter's son among them?

Returning to the Provisional Government: Regard its members closely, these gods *ad interim*. The ground of their depression is that everybody is not Just like Them. They have a grievance also in the matter of death; which might have been arranged better. It saddens them to know that so much excellence as theirs should perish from the earth. The skeptic is slacker, too; excusing himself from the hardships of right living by pleading the futility of effort.

Unfair? Of course I am unfair; all this is assumption without knowledge, a malicious imputation of the worst possible motives, judgment from a part. It is their own method.

A wise word was said of late: "There are poor colonels, but no

poor regiments." It would be truer to change a word; to say that there are poor soldiers, but no poor regiments. The gloomster picks the poorest soldier he can find, and holds him up to our eyes as a sample. "This is life!" says the pessimist, proud at last. "Now you see the stuff your regiments are made of!"

If one of these pallbearers should write a treatise on pomology he would dwell lovingly on apple-tree borers, blight and pest and scale. He would say no word of spray or pruning; he would scoff at the glory of apple blossoms as the rosy illusion of romance; and he would resolutely suppress all mention of – apples. But he would feature hard cider, for all that; and he would revel in cankerworms.

These blighters and borers – figuratively speaking – when the curse of the bottle is upon them – the ink bottle – they weave ugly words to ugly phrases for ugly books about ugly things; with ugly thoughts of ugly deeds they chronicle life and men as dreary, sordid, base, squalid, paltry, tawdry, mean, dismal, dull and dull again, interminably dull – vile, flat, stale, unprofitable and insipid. No splendid folly or valiant sin – much less impracticable idealisms, such as kindness, generosity, faith, forgiveness, courage, honor, friendship, love; no charm or joy or beauty, no ardors that flame and glow. They show forth a world of beastliness and bankruptcy; they picture life as a purposeless hell.

I beg of you, sir, do not permit yourself to be alarmed. What you hear is but the backdoor gossip of the world. And these

people do not get enough exercise. Their livers are torpid. Some of them, poor fellows, are quite sincere – and some are merely in the fashion. It isn't true, you know; not of all of us, all the time. Nothing is changed; there is no shadow but proves the light; in the farthest world of any universe, in the latest eternity you choose to mention, it will still be playing the game to run out your hits; and there, as here, only the shirker will lie down on the job.

In the meantime, now and here, there are two things, and two only, that a man may do with his ideals: He may hold and shape them, or tread them under foot; ripen or rot.

What, sir, the hills are steep, the sand heavy, the mire is Despond-deep; for that reason will you choose a balky horse? Or will you follow a leader who plans surrender?

The bookshelviki have thrown away the sword before the fight. They shriek a shameful message: "All is lost! Save yourselves who can!"

The battle is sore upon us; true. But there is another war cry than this. It was born of a bitter hour; it was nobly boasted, and brave men made it good. Now, and for all time to come, as the lost and furious fight reels by, men will turn and turn again for the watchword of Verdun: "They shall not pass! They shall not pass!"

Pardon the pontifical character of these remarks. They come tardy off. For years I have kept a safe and shameful silence when I should have been shouting, "Janet! Donkeys!" and throwing things. I will be highbrow-beaten no longer. I hereby resign from

the choir inaudible. Modesty may go hang and prudence be jiggered; I wear Little Miss Brag's colors for favor; I have cut me an ellum gad, and I mean to use it on the seat of the scorner.

"Everything in Nature is engaged in writing its own history." So says Emerson or somebody. Here is the roll call of that lonesome bit between the Rio Grande and Caballo Mountain. Salem, Garfield, Donahue's, Derry and Shandon; those were the hamlets of the east side. Sound Irish, don't they? They were just what they sound like, at first. A few Irish families, big families, half of them girls – Irish girls; young gentlemen with a fancy to settle down settled right there or thereabouts. That's a quick way to start settlements. There was also a sardonic Greenhorn, to keep alive a memory of the old-time Texans, before the fences. A hundred years older than Greenhorn was the old Mexican outpost, San Ysidro; ruthlessly changed to Garfield when the Mississippi Valley moved in. Transportation was the poorest ever; this was the last-won farm land of New Mexico.

Along with snakes, centipedes, little yellow bobcats, whisky, poker, maybe a beef or two – there were other features worthy of note. Each man had to be cook, housekeeper, hunter, laundryman, shoemaker, blacksmith, bookkeeper, purchasing agent, miner, mason, nurse, doctor, gravedigger, interpreter, surveyor, tailor, jailor, judge, jury and sheriff. Having no sea handy, he was seldom a sailorman.

A man who could do these things well enough to make them work might be illiterate, but he couldn't be ignorant, not on a

bet. It wasn't possible. He knew too much. He had to do his own thinking. There was no one else to do it for him. And he could not be wretched. He was too busy. "We may be poor sinners, but we're not miserable" – that was a favorite saying. When they brought in supplies or when they packed for a long trip, they learned foresight and imagination. A right good college, the frontier; there are many who are proud of that degree.

It is easy to be hospitable, kindly and free-hearted in a thinly settled country; it is your turn next, you know generosity from both sides; the Golden Rule has no chance to get rusty. So they were pleasant and friendly people. They learned coöperation by making wagon roads together, by making dams and big irrigation ditches, and from the round-ups. They lived in the open air, and their work was hard, they had health; there were endless difficulties to overcome; happiness had a long start and the pursuit was merry.

There was one other great advantage – hope. They had much to hope for. Almost everything. They wished three great wishes: Water for the fields, safety from floods, a way to the outside world. To-day the thick and tangled *bosques* are cleared to smiling farms, linked by a shining network of ditches. The floods are impounded at Engle Dam, and held there for man's uses. A great irrigation canal keeps high and wide, with just fall enough to move the water; each foot saved of high level means added miles of reclaimed land under the ditch. To a stranger's eye the water of that ditch runs clearly uphill. To hold that high level the main

ditch, which is first taken out to serve the west side, crosses the Rio Grande on a high flume to Derry; curves high and winding about the wide farm lands of Garfield valley; is siphoned under the river for Hatch and Rodey, and then is siphoned once again to the east side, to break out in the sunlight for the use of Rincon Valley. Rough and crooked is made smooth and straight; safe bridge and easy grade, a modern highway follows up the valley, with a brave firefly twinkling by night, to join the great National Trail at Engle Dam. This is what they dreamed amid sand and thorn – and their dreams have all come true. Now who can say which was better, the hoping or the having?

It was pleasant enough, at least, on this day of hoping. Stargazer shuffled by farm and farm, and turned aside at last to where, with ax and pick and team and tackle, a big man was grubbing up mesquite roots. Unheeded, for the big man wrought sturdily, Charlie rode close; elbow on saddlehorn, chin on hand, he watched the work with mingled interest and pity.

"There," he said, and shuddered – "there, but for the grace of God, goes Charlie See!"

The big man straightened up and held a hand to his aching back. His face was brown and his hair was red, his eyes were big and blue and merry, and his big, homely, honest mouth was one broad grin.

"Why, if it ain't Nubbins! Welcome, little stranger! Hunting saddle horses – again?"

"Why, no, Big Boy – I'm not. Not this time."

Big Boy rubbed the bridge of his nose, disconcerted. "You always was before. Not horses? Well, well! What say we go a-visitin', then?" He squinted at the low sun. "I'll call this a day, and we'll mosey right home to my little old shack, and wolf down a few eggs and such. Then we'll wash our hands and faces right good, catch us up some fresh horses out of the pasture, and terrapin up the road a stretch. Bully big moonlight night." He began unhooking his team.

"Fine! I just love to ride. Only came about fifty miles to-day, too."

"I was thinkin' some of droppin' in on old man Fenderson. I ain't been over there since last night. Coalie! You, Zip! Ged-dap!"

"Mr. Adam Forbes," said Charlie, "I've got you by the foot!"

"Now if you was wishful of any relaxations," said Adam after supper, "you might side me up in the feet hills to-morrow, prospectin'."

"I might," said Charlie; "and then again I mightn't. Don't you go and bet on it."

Adam stropped his razor. "You know there's three cañons headin' off from MacCleod's Tank Park? And the farthest one, that big, steep, rough, wide, long, high, ugly, sandy, deep gash that runs anti-gogglin' north, splittin' off these spindlin' little hills from the main Caballo and Big Timber Mountain – ever been through that? 'Pache Cañon, we call it – though we got no license to."

"Part way," said Charlie. Then his voice lit up with animation. "Say, Big Chump, that's it! Them warty little hills here – that's what makes us look down on you folks the way we do. And here I thought all along it was because you was splay-foot farmers, and unfortunate, you know, that way like all nesters is. But blamed if I don't think it was them hills, all the time. We got regular old he-mountains, we have. But these here little old squatty hills clutterin' up your back yard – why, Adam, they ain't respectable, them hills ain't – squanderin' round where a body might stub his toe on 'em, any time. You ought to pile 'em up, Adam. They look plumb shiftless."

"That listens real good to me. You got more brains than people say." Adam scraped tranquilly at cheek and chin, necessitating an occasional pause in his speech. "Now you can see for yourself how plumb foolish and futile a little runt of a man seems to a people that ain't never been stunted."

"'Seems' is a right good word," said Charlie. He blew out a smoke ring. "You sure picked the very word you wanted, that time. I didn't think you had sense enough."

Adam passed an appraising finger tip over his brown cheek; he stirred up fresh lather.

"Yes," he said musingly, "a little sawed off sliver like you sure does look right comical to a full-grown man. Like me. Or Hob Lull." He paused, brush in air, to regard his guest benignantly. "I wonder if girls feel that way too? Miss Lyn Dyer, now? Lull, he hangs round there right smart – and he's a fine, big, upstanding

man." He lathered his face and rubbed it in. "First off, I fixed to assassinate him quiet, from behind. You know them two girls don't hardly know where they do live – always together, Harkey's house or Fenderson's. So I mistrusted, natural enough, that 'twas Miss Edith he was waitin' on. But I was mistook. Just in time to save his life from my bloody and brutal designs he began tolling Miss Lyn to one side to look at sunsets and books and such, givin' me a chance to buzz Miss Edith alone. Good thing for him. That's why I'm lettin' you tag along to-night – you can entertain Pete Harkey and Ma Fenderson and the old man, so's they won't pester me and Hobby."

"Like fun I will! If you fellows had any decent feeling at all you'd both of you clear out and give me a chance."

"Now, deary, you hadn't ought to talk like that – indeed you hadn't!" protested Adam. "You plumb distress me. You ought to declare yourself, feller. I'd always hate it if I was to slay you, and then find out I'd been meddlin' with Hobby Lull's private affairs. I'd hate that – I sure would!"

"Well now, there's no use of your askin' me for advice." Charlie's eyebrows shrugged, and so did his shoulders. "You'll have to decide these things for yourself. Say, you mangy, moth-eaten, slab-sided, long, lousy, lop-eared parallelopipedon, are you goin' to be all night dollin' up? Let's ride!"

"Don't blame you for bein' impatient. Hob, he's there now." Face and voice expressed fine tolerance; Adam looked into a scrap of broken mirror for careful knotting of a gay necktie.

"I won't be sorry to see Hob once more, at that," observed Charlie. "Always liked Lull. Took to him first time I ever saw him. That was seven years ago, when I was only a kid."

"Only a kid! Only – Great Cæsar's ghost, what are you now?"

"I'm twenty-five years old in my stocking feet. And here's how I met up with Lull. El Paso had a big ball game on with Silver City, and Hob, he wanted to be umpire. Nobody on either team would hear of it, and not one of the fifteen hundred rip-roarin', howlin' fans. It was sure a mean mess while it lasted. You see, there was a lot of money up on the game."

"And who umpired?"

"Hob."

IV

"Money was so scarce in that country that the babies had to cut their teeth on certified checks."
– Bluebeard for Happiness.

"The cauldrified and chittering truth."
– The Ettrick Shepherd.

"As I was a-tellin' you, when I got switched off," said Adam, in the starlit road, "I found gold dust in 'Pache Cañon nigh onto a year ago. Not much – just a color – but it set me to thinkin'."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.