

to a test of brute strength with desperate men; but—well, it was a comfort to have my trigger finger snuggle down on it in the way that trigger fingers have an unconscious way of doing when one is familiar with firearms.

Then, without so much as touching a hairpin, I sat down by the window to keep my vigil. I felt that I had need of all my faculties, all my courage, all my coolness in time of emergency, and it has always been my belief that the mad panic that seizes humanity in midnight danger is caused in part by the subconscious knowledge of the informality of their attire.

HOW long I sat there, I cannot say; but suddenly every nerve that had been momentarily lulled to quiet jumped to attention. For, without warning of any sort to my dulled hearing, there came a spit of fire from the window below me, quickly followed by the sound that meant a gunshot. For a moment I sat literally frozen with terror, straining my eyes into the dense blackness of the starless night. Presently the window-sill on which my hand rested began to vibrate in response to what I knew must be heavy blows upon the door below; then came a final crash, another shot, and then silence so far as I could tell.

Yet I knew it was merely the lull before the storm that would break upon my bolted door. Silently I rose to my feet; for I meant to meet whatever it was bravely. As I had expected, the sound presently came of heavy blows upon my door. I moved silently near it, intending when it was burst in to try to slip out in the confusion, and possibly have some show of escape. Of course, it was a perfectly idiotic thing to do; but anything was better than to be found covering and shrieking under the bed clothes. I could hear nothing. No voice could have reached me, even though the speaker shouted in my very ear.

Suddenly the door gave way, and in the semidarkness I saw several figures catapult into the room. Then, with my head lowered, I dashed through the door—straight into the stomach of an unseen figure which caught me in a cruel grip, his fingers seeming fairly to meet in my flesh. I threw up my hand as his other fist came heavily against me. There was a sudden flash and roar as my trigger finger involuntarily tightened and set off my little Colt. I felt my captor stagger, and then a light flashed up—and I found myself surrounded by half a dozen men in the red tunics of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police!

"Good God! A woman!" exclaimed the man who held me, and then, as he wiped the blood from a little scratch on his cheek, he said, "Drop that gun!"

But, though his grasp loosened, I was anything but gently hauled down the narrow stairs and placed in the only one of the chairs that had escaped destruction in what I now saw had been a fierce scrimmage.

"What do you mean by this kind of treatment?" I said, when at length I regained my breath and my dazed senses.

"It's not for you, little lady, to ask questions," said a man whose red tunic bore the insignia of Sergeant. "It's for us to ask, and for you to answer—and you want to be careful what you say too; for everything will be used against you. Why didn't you open the door when I commanded you to do so in the name of the King?"

"I didn't hear you."

"Didn't hear! That's likely—not."

"But I am deaf," I insisted. "I cannot hear anything."

"Can't hear! What have you been doing but hearing everything I am saying?"

"I have not heard a sound of it all. I have been reading your lips."

"Don't take me for a blawsted muttonhead of an Englisher!" the Sergeant broke out in irritation. "I've got more sense than to believe that rot."

"But it's true!" and to my disgust I began to feel myself getting hysterical. "I can't hear! I can't hear! I haven't heard any sound but a pistol shot in twenty years!" I fairly shrieked. Just then I saw a stir in one corner behind some men in red tunics, and Wells, handcuffed, broke through, and I saw Lim say:

"What she's saying is true, sir. She can't hear, she really can't."

"Shut up!" said the Sergeant. "I'm not asking you questions. Don't open your mouth again until I get ready for you!" and poor Wells, protesting, was hustled back out of my sight.

"Now, you know perfectly where that bunch of horses came from. Out with the truth! It'll go better with you in the end," said the officer turning again to me.

"Indeed, and I don't know anything about them at all. I never saw them until I heard them come into the corrals."

"Heard them, eh? That's a fine slip, little lady. I told you to be careful what you said."

"But I tell you I can hear such things as that, just because of the vibrations."

Officer and men burst out into a guffaw.

"Heard it by feeling, eh?" the Sergeant said when his merriment had died out. "Next thing you'll be tellin' me you can taste things just by looking at em' with a bandage over your eyes. Now, come down to sense, little lady! You look a little different caliber from this hardtack here that's been raising Cain for years with other people's stock. If you'll tell me the truth, if you will turn State's evidence against this gang, you can save yourself trial and imprisonment."

"But I don't know anything at all about them."

The Sergeant smiled derisively.

"I came an unexpected guest last night," I insisted, growing momentarily less sure of my nerves and my self control, and every moment seeing more and more

clearly the net of circumstantial evidence which seemingly bound me hand and foot as an accomplice of a gang of criminals, guilty of I knew not what crimes.

WHILE I was speaking, a tall, well set up man had entered, and after a quick glance about the room sauntered up to the group around me. As he came within the circle of the light I saw him start slightly at sight of me. I looked closely at him, in the hope that he might be some one I had met in Canada, who could vouch for the truth of what I said. But in no way did he resemble anyone I had ever seen, although his beard and mustache would be a safe disguise, since all the men I could recall were beardless.

"What's all this about?" he said, and my heart leaped to hear an unmistakable American accent. "You don't mean to say that you think this lady has anything to do with the gang?"

"Anything to do! Well, I should say yes!" was the reply. "Anybody that barricades herself in as she did and then shoots when told to give up can't be called harmless and peace loving—not on this side of the line, at least. And then, on top of all this, she spins a yarn about hearing with her eyes and feeling sounds by vibrations—Oh, pshaw! There's somethin' doin', though I don't know whether it means that she is bughouse or thinks I am."

"Hearing with her eyes, eh?" said the American. "Let me look at her," and he turned the light so that it shown more directly in my face. As he did so, I saw something that electrified me, the scar of a pistol wound in his throat just above where a collar would have been had he been wearing anything but a flannel shirt. It was a mark that I had tucked away in my memory as proof of identity.

"Oh!" I cried, half rising from my chair. "Oh! You know me! Remember Mackinac!"

Without a word to me, he turned to the Sergeant and said, "You have made a very grave error. I know this lady. She is deaf, just as she says. She reads the lips, just as she claims. She can hear by vibrations, just as she has stated."

"But how did she happen to be here just at this time, if she doesn't know anything about this gang?" the Sergeant insisted with true British persistence. "She says she came in an automobile."

"So she did," said Ralph Prescott calmly. "And I have no doubt that somewhere around this place you will find her chauffeur gagged—or dead."

Again there was a disturbance in the corner, and Wells pushed through the group, looking like a maniac, and said excitedly, "I'm him! I'm him! They got me away

from her by saying they would help me mend the tire, and they knocked me down and gagged me and tied me up and laid me away in the woodshed, right under her very nose, and she not able to hear a sound, nor know what she was up against."

"You have made a mistake," said Ralph Prescott again. "Let her go without further trouble. If you carry it on, you will stir up a hornet's nest that may come back at you through Ottawa. You know who I am. I tell you with all authority that I know what I am talking about. This lady has absolutely no connection with this gang of horse thieves and smugglers."

"You stake your honor upon that?" said the Sergeant.

"I stake my honor upon every assertion she has made."

"You assume officially full responsibility, in case you are mistaken?"

"I assume full responsibility for everything connected with her, and I am not mistaken."

The Sergeant considered for a full moment; then at an almost imperceptible gesture the police, who had stood within easy reach of me, stepped back, and the Sergeant, bowing with courtly grace, said, "Madam, I have no more to say. You are free. And I apologize for any roughness of treatment and seeming lack of courtesy as being the result of misconception, rather than any intention to do you harm."

HOURS later, as Wells sent the automobile spinning over the smooth country roads, I said to Ralph Prescott, "But how did you know I was not one of the gang?"

"I did not know," he replied.

"Then why did you say and do what you did?"

"Simply because of Mackinac. Through you there I not only ran down two of the slickest counterfeiters in the country and bagged them, but I also got their confederates, who were passing money through one of the summer shops on the island. We of the service never forget things like that. I said nothing at the time. There was no opportunity. I never wrote to you, for the fewer friends, the fewer ties we have, the better; but I have always felt that sometime, somewhere, somehow, I should be able to repay the debt. Even though you had been one of that gang, I should nevertheless have done all that lay in my power to get you off—and then felt that I still had some interest to pay."

But whether that interest will ever fall to my coffers of life I cannot say as yet; for from the hour that Ralph Prescott bade me farewell at Moose Jaw I have never seen him nor heard aught of him.

SOME ODD FARMS

By John L. Cowan

OF the diversification of the ancient and honorable industry of farming, there appears to be no end. Like Alexander, the farmer continually sighs for new worlds to conquer; but, unlike Alexander, he finds it easy to gratify his longing by exploiting some new outlet for his activities.

To enumerate all the new farming industries that have been inaugurated within recent years would be difficult. Probably none is more important than timber farming, which is attaining great prominence in California and is being experimented with in Arizona and other parts of the Southwest.

To grow trees for profit, as men are accustomed to grow cabbages and potatoes, or even peaches and apples, is impossible or unattractive in most parts of the country, and with most varieties of timber, on account of the long period of time required for the crop to reach maturity. Yet it has been found that the eucalyptus tree (an importation from Australia) will yield quicker, and often much larger, returns than can be expected from orchards, and that a eucalyptus plantation can be so conserved as to be a large producer indefinitely.

Six hundred trees are planted to the acre. When the trees are three or four years old the first cutting is made, the small, crooked, and otherwise imperfect trees being removed and cut into cordwood, which sells at fourteen dollars a cord in Los Angeles and other cities of California where other fuel is scarce and high priced. Every year thereafter the grove is thinned out to give the trees left standing a better opportunity for growth. The successive cuttings are used for firewood, fence posts, railroad ties, piling, bridge timbers, ship masts, and sawmill timber, the use being determined by the size of the trees.

The eucalyptus is one of the most valuable of known



A Eucalyptus Farm in Southern California.

hardwoods, and is used for any purpose, from the making of implement handles to the manufacture of piano cases. It is said to be the fastest growing tree in the world, as trees twenty years old frequently attain a height of one hundred and seventy-five feet and a diameter of five feet. When cut down, new shoots quickly spring up from the old root, and in a few years these produce a new crop of timber.

Owing to the growing scarcity of hardwoods and the increasing difficulty of obtaining lumber at a reasonable price, the Santa Fé railroad has purchased eight thousand acres of land near San Diego and is planting it in eucalyptus trees, in order to provide for its future supply of ties. Numerous plantation companies have been formed to plant eucalyptus trees on a large scale, and many individuals are planting groves; so that the production of timber seems destined to become one of the most important of California's many activities.

Another peculiar California industry, of which everyone has heard, is feather farming. It is now more than twenty years since Edwin Cawston of Pasadena brought from Africa the first consignment of fifty ostriches. From that beginning, the rearing of ostriches for their plumage has grown to be an industry of considerable magnitude in Florida, California, and Arizona, and American ostrich plumes are recognized as being fully equal to the best importations from Africa.

Still another odd industry of the Golden State might be called bug farming. The bug in question is the fig wasp. It is no longer than a gnat; but it struggles along burdened with the name "Blastophaga psenes." No wonder it has been found exceedingly difficult to acclimate it on American soil! In order to produce the Smyrna type of fig, it is necessary that the pollen of the