Cavanagh, Forest Ranger

The Great Conservation Novel

By HAMLIN GARLAND

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It was again dusk as he rode up to his own hitching pole and slipped from the saddle.

Wetherford came out, indicating by his manner that he had recovered his confidence once more. "How did you find things in the valley?" he inquired as they walked away toward the corral.

"Bad," responded the ranger.

"In what way?"

"The chief has been dismissed, and all the rascals are chuckling with glee. I've resigned from the service."

Wetherford was aghast. "What for?"

"I will not serve under any other chief. The best thing for you to do is to go out when I do. I think by keeping on that uniform you can get to the train with me."

"Did you see Lize and my girl?"

"No; I only remained in town a minute. It was too hot for me. I'm done with it. Wetherford, I'm going back to civilization. No more wild west for me." The bitterness of his voice touched the older man's heart, but he considered it merely a mood.

"Don't lose your nerve. Maybe this ends the reign of terror."

"Nothing will end the moral shiftlessness of this country but the death of the freebooter. That job was done by men who hated the dagoes—hated 'em because they were rival claimants for the range. It's nonsense to attempt to fasten it on men like Neill Ballard. The men who did that piece of work are well known stock owners."

"I reckon that's so."

"Well, now, who's going to convict them? I can't do it. I'm going to pull out as soon as I can put my books in shape, and you'd better go too."

They were standing at the gate of the corral, and the roar of the mountain stream enveloped them in a cloud of sound.

Wetherford spoke slowly: "I hate to lose my girl now that I've seen her, but I guess you're right. And Lize, poor old critter! It's a shame the way I've queered her life, and I'd give my right arm to be where I was twelve years ago, but with a price on my head and old age coming on I don't see myself ever again getting up to par. It's a losing game for me now."

There was resignation as well as despair in his voice, and Cavanagh felt it, but he said: "There's one other question that may come up for decision. If that Basque died of smallpox you may possibly take it."

"I've figured on that, but it will take a day or two to show on me. I don't feel any ache in my bones yet. If I do come down you keep away from me. You've got to live and take care of Virginia."

"She should never have returned to this accursed country," Cavanagh harshly replied, starting back toward the cabin.

The constable, smoking his pipe beside the fireplace, did not present an anxious face. On the contrary, he seemed plumply content as he replied to the ranger's greeting. He represented very well the type of officer which these disorderly communities produce. Brave and tireless when working along the line of his prejudices, he could be most laxly inefficient when his duties cut across his own or his neighbor's interests. Being a cattleman by training, he was glad of the red herring which the Texas officer had trailed across the line of his pursuit.

This attitude still further inflamed Cavanagh's indignant hate of the country. The theory which the deputy developed was transparent folly. "It was just a case of plain robbery," he argued. "One of them dagoes had money, and Neill Ballard and that man Edwards just naturally follered him and killed the whole bunch and scooted. That's my guess."

An hour later the sound of a horse's hoofs on the bridge gave warning of a visitor, and as Cavanagh went to the door Gregg rode up, seeking particulars as to the death of the herder and the whereabouts of the sheep.

The ranger was not in a mood to invite the sheepman in, and, besides, he perceived the danger to which Wetherford was exposed; therefore his answers were short. Gregg, on his part, did not appear anxious to enter.

"What happened to that old hobo I sent up?" he asked.

Cavanagh briefly retold his story, and at the end of it Gregg grunted. "You say you burned the tent and all the bedding?"

"Every thread of it. It wasn't safe to leave it."

"What ailed the man?"

"I don't know, but it looked and smelled like smallpox."

The deputy rose with a spring. "Smallpox! You didn't handle the cuss?"

Cavanagh did not spare him. "Somebody had to lend a hand. I couldn't see him die there alone, and he had to be buried, so I did the job."

Gregg recoiled a step or two, but the deputy stood staring, the implication of all this sinking deep. "Were you wearing the same clothes you've got on?"

"Yes, but I used a slicker while working around the body."

"Good king!" The sweat broke out on the man's face. "You ought to be arrested."

Ross took a step toward him. "I'm at your service."

"Keep off!" shouted the sheriff.

Ross smiled, then became very serious. "I took every precaution, Mr. Deputy. I destroyed everything that could possibly carry the disease. I burned every utensil, including the saddle—everything but the man's horse and his dog."

The officer caught up his hat and coat and started for the door. "It's me for the open air," said he.

As the men withdrew Ross followed them and, standing in his door, delivered his final volley. "If this state does not punish those fiends every decent man should emigrate out of it, turning the land over to the wolves, the wildcats and other beasts of prey."

Gregg as he retreated called back: "That's all right, Mr. Ranger, but you'd better keep to the hills for a few weeks. The settlers down below won't enjoy having a man with smallpox chassaying around town. They might rope and tie you."

Wetherford came out of his hiding place with a grave face.

"They're right about our staying clear of town," said Cavanagh. "They'll quarantine us sure."

Wetherford now that the danger of arrest was over was disposed to be grimly humorous. "There's no great loss without some small gain. I don't think we'll be troubled by any more visitors, not even by sheriffs or doctors. I reckon you and I are in for a couple of months of the quiet life—the kind we read about."

Cavanagh now that he was definitely out of the forest service perceived the weight of every objection which his friends and relatives had made against his going into it. It was a lonely life and must ever be so. It was all very well for a young unmarried man who loved the woods and hills beyond all things else and who could wait for advancement, but it was a sad place for one who desired a wife. The ranger's place was on the trail and in the hills, and to bring a woman into these high silences, into these lone reaches of forest and fell, would be cruel. To bring children into them would be criminal.

All the next day, while Wetherford pottered about the cabin or the yard, Cavanagh toiled at his papers, resolved to leave everything in the perfect order which he loved. Whenever he looked round upon his belongings, each and all so redolent of the wilderness, he found them very dear. His chairs, which he had rived out of slabs; his guns, his robes, his saddles and their accouterments—all meant much to him. "Some of them must go with me," he said, "and when I am settled down in the old home I'll have one room to myself which shall be so completely of the mountain America that when I am within it I can fancy myself back in the camp."

He thought of South Africa as a possibility and put it aside, knowing well that no other place could have the same indefinable charm that the Rocky mountains possessed for the reason that he had come to them at his most impressionable age. Then, too, the United States, for all its faults, seemed merely an extension of the English form of government.

Wetherford was also moving in deep thought and at last put his perplexity into a question. "What am I to do? I'm beginning to feel queer. I reckon the chances for my having smallpox are purty fair. Maybe I'd better drop down to Sulphur and report to the authorities. I've got a day or two before the blossoms will begin to show on me."

Cavanagh studied him closely. "Now, don't get to thinking you've got it. I don't see how you could attach a germ. The high altitude and the winds up there ought to prevent infection. I'm not afraid for myself, but if you're able perhaps we'd better pull out tomorrow."

Later in the day Wetherford expres[illegible]

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[illegible] warned him of something deeper changing in his own nature.

Approaching the brooding felon, he spoke gently and sadly. "I'm sorry for you, Wetherford, I sure am, but it's up to you to get clear away so that Lee will never by any possible chance find out that you are alive. She has a romantic notion of you as a representative of the old time west, and it would be a dreadful shock to her if she knew you as you are. It's hard to leave her, I know, now that you've seen her, but that's the manly thing to do—the only thing to do."

"Oh, you're right—of course you're right. But I wish I could be of some use to her. I wish I could kind of keep watch over her. I'd be glad enough to play the scullion in her kitchen. But if you're going to take her"—

"But I'm not," protested Ross. "I'm going to leave her right here. I can't take her."

Wetherford looked at him with steady eyes, into which a keen light leaped. "Don't you intend to marry her?"

Ross turned away. "No; I don't. I mean it is impossible."

"Why not? Don't tell me you're already married?" He said this with menacing tone.

"No; I'm not married, but"— He stopped without making his meaning plain. "I'm going to leave the country and"—

Wetherford caught him up. "I reckon I understand what you mean. You consider Lize and me undesirable parents—not just the kind you'd cut out of the herd of your own free will. Well, that's all right. I don't blame you so far as I'm concerned. But you can forget me—consider me a dead one. I'll never bother her nor you."

Cavanagh threw out an impatient hand. "It is impossible," he protested. "It's better for her and better for me that I should do so. I'm going back to my own people."

Wetherford was thoroughly roused now. Some part of his old time fire seemed to return to him. He rose from his chair and approached the ranger firmly. "I've seen you act like a man, Ross Cavanagh. You've been a good partner these last few days—a son couldn't have treated me better—and I hate to think ill of you. But my girl loves you—I could see that. I could see her lean to you."

Ross said slowly: "It will be hard for you to understand when I tell you that I care a great deal for your daughter, but a man like me—an Englishman—cannot marry, or he ought not to marry—for himself alone. There are so many others to consider—his friends, his sisters"—

Wetherford dropped his hand. "I see!" His tone was despairing. "When I was young we married the girls we loved in defiance of everything. But you are not that kind. You may be right. I'm nothing but a debilitated old cowpuncher branded by the state—a man who threw away his chance—but I can tell you straight I've learned that nothing but the love of a woman counts."

In the meantime Lee Virginia waited with increasing impatience for Ross Cavanagh's return, expecting each noon to see him appear at the door. But when three days passed without word or sign from him her uneasiness deepened into alarm. The whole town was profoundly excited over the murder, that she knew, and she began to fear that some of the ranger's enemies had worked their evil will upon him.

With this vague fear in her heart, she went forth into the street to inquire. One of the first men she met was Sifton, who was sitting, as usual, outside the livery barn door, smiling, inefficient, content. Of him she asked, "Have you seen Mr. Cavanagh?"

"Yes," he answered; "I saw him yesterday, just after dinner, down at the postoffice. He was writing a letter at the desk. Almost immediately afterward he mounted and rode away. He was much cut up over his chief's dismissal."

"Why has he not written to me," she asked herself, "and why should he have gone away without a word of greeting, explanation or goodby? It would have taken but a moment's time to call at the door."

The more she dwelt upon this neglect the more significant it became. After the tender look in his eyes, after the ardent clasp of his hand, the thought that he could be so indifferent was at once a source of pain and self reproach.

With childish frankness she went to Lize and told her what she had learn[illegible]

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SHE BURIED HER FACE IN THE COVERLET.

sign after promising to come." She buried her face in the coverlet of her mother's bed and wept in childish grief and despair.

Lize was forced to acknowledge that the ranger's action was inexplicable, but she did her best to make light of it. "He may have hurried to town on some errand and hadn't a moment to spare. These are exciting days for him, remember. He'll be in tomorrow sure."

With a faint hope of this the girl rose and went about her daily tasks, but the day passed and another without word or sign of the recreant lover, and each day brought a deeper sense of loss, but her pride would not permit her to show her grief.

Young Gregg, without knowing in the least the cause of her troubled face, took this occasion to offer comfort. His manner toward her had changed since she no longer had a part in the management of the eating house, and for that reason she did not repulse him as sharply as she had been wont to do. He really bore Cavanagh no ill will and was, indeed, shrewd enough to understand that Lee admired the ranger and that his own courtship was rather hopeless. Nevertheless he persisted, his respect for her growing as he found her steadfast in her refusal to permit any familiarity.

"See here, Miss Virginia," he cried as she was passing him in the hall, "I can see you're worried about Lize—I mean your mother—and if I can be of any use I hope you'll call on me." As she thanked him without enthusiasm he added, "How is she tonight?"

"I think she's better."

"Can I see her?"

His tone was so earnest that the girl was moved to say, "I'll ask her."

"I wish you would. I want to say something to her."

Lize's voice reached where they stood. "Come in, Joe; the door's open."

He accepted her invitation rather awkwardly, but his face was impassive as he looked down upon her.

"Well, how about it?" she asked. "What's doing in the town?"

"Not much of anything except talk. The whole country is buzzing over this dismissal of the chief forester."

"They'd better be doing something about that murder."

"They are. They're going up there in streams to see where the work was done. The coroner's inquest was held yesterday." He grinned. "'Parties came to their death by persons unknown.'"

Lize scowled. "It's a wonder they don't charge it up to Ross Cavanagh or some other ranger."

"That would be a little too raw, even for this country. They're all feeling gay over this change in the forestry head. But, see here, don't you want to get out for a ride? I've got my new machine out here. It rides like silk."

"I reckon a hearse is about my kind," she replied darkly. "If you could take me up to Cavanagh's cabin I'd go," she added. "I want to see him."

"I can take you part way," he instantly declared. "But you'd have to ride a horse the last ten miles."

"Couldn't do it, Joe," she sighed. "These last few days I've been about as boneless as an eel. Funny the way a fellow keeps going when he's got something to do that has to be done. I'll tell you what, if you want to take me and Lee up to Sulphur I'll go you."

"Sure thing. What day?"

"Not for a day or two. I'm not quite up to it just now, but by Saturday I'll be saddlewise again."

Joe turned joyously to Lee. "That will be great! Won't you come out for a spin this minute?"

For a moment Lee was tempted. Anything to get away from this horrible little den and the people who infested it was her feeling, but she distrusted Gregg, and she knew that every eye in the town would be upon her if she went, and, besides, Ross might return while she was away. "No; not today," she replied [illegible]ally, but her voice was gentler than it had ever been to him.

The young fellow was moved to explain his position to Lize. [illegible]

[illegible] a reward, and it looks as if something would really be done this time. They say Neill Ballard was mixed up in it and that old guy that showed me the sheep. But I don't take much stock in that. Whoever did it was paid by the cattlemen, sure thing." The young fellow's tone and bearing made a favorable impression upon Lize. She had never seen this side of him, for the reason that he had hitherto treated her as a bartender. She was acute enough to understand that her social status had changed along with her release from the cash register, and she was slightly more reconciled, although she could not see her way to providing a living for herself and Lee. For all these reasons she was unwontedly civil to Joe and sent him away highly elated with the success of his interview.

"I'm going to let him take us up to Sulphur," she said to Lee. "I want to go to town."

Lee was silent, but a keen pang ran through her heart, for she perceived in this remark by her mother a tacit acknowledgment of Ross Cavanagh's desertion of them both. His invitation to them to come and camp with him was only a polite momentary impulse. "I'm ready to go," she announced at last. "I'm tired of this place. Let us go tomorrow."

ALL MY PIMPLES GONE

Girl Tells How a Blotchy Skin Was Cleansed By a Simple Wash.

"I was ashamed of my face," writes Miss Minnie Pickard of Altamahaw, N. C. "It was all full of pimples and scars, but after using D. D. D. Prescription I can say that now there is no sign of that Eczema, and that was three years ago."

D. D. D. has become so famous as a cure and instant relief in Eczema and all other serious skin diseases, that its value is sometimes overlooked in clearing up rash, pimples, blackheads, and all other minor forms of skin impurities.

The fact is, that while D. D. D. is so penetrating that it strikes to the very root of Eczema or any other serious trouble, the soothing Oil of Wintergreen, Thymol and other ingredients are so carefully compounded there is no wash for the skin made that can compare with this great household remedy for every kind of skin trouble.

D. D. D. is pleasant to use, perfectly harmless to the most delicate skin, and absolutely reliable. A 25-cent bottle will give you positive proof of the wonderful effectiveness of this great remedy.

J. H. Orme, Marion, Ky.

Teer-Belt.

On last Wednesday, June 7th, Mr. Everitt Teer and Miss Retha Belt, both of Salem neighborhood, were united in the holy bonds of matrimony at 8 o'clock at the home of the bride's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Will Belt, one-half mile south of Salem. The bride is a beautiful and attractive young lady surrounded by many friends, while the groom is the oldest son of Curtis Teer and is a prosperous young farmer, which any one should be proud of.

May their walk together on earth be long and full of joy and happiness is the wish of the writer.

—A FRIEND.

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POPHAM'S ASTHMA REMEDY gives instant relief and an absolute cure in all cases of Asthma, Bronchitis and Hay Fever. Sold by druggists; mail on receipt of price $1.00. Trial Package by mail 10 cents. Williams M'f'g. Co., Props. Cleveland, Ohio. Sold only by J. H. Orme.

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For Coughs and Colds.

When you feel discouraged, confused, nervous, tired, worried or despondent it is a sure sign you need MOTT'S NERVERINE PILLS. They renew the normal vigor and make life worth living. Be sure and ask for MOTT'S NERVERINE PILLS. [illegible] J. H. Orme, Marion, Ky.

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Now, say, you ought to hear Mt. Zion choir sing. They sure come to the point.

While returning home from church Saturday night Lawrence Lucas' horse ran away and broke up his buggy. Oh, what a time "Slats" does have.

Plenty of well-filled baskets at Mt. Zion Sunday. We wish to thank the children for the fine pieces which they recited.

Miss Ora Carrick spent the day with Miss Ruby Moore Tuesday.

Hope we may see many more Children's Days like the one Sunday. The writer sure spent a joyful day at Mt. Zion Sunday.

For fear this will not escape the waste basket I will ring off and come again.

WANTED CORN

Until further notice we will give 55cts. for white corn shucked and delivered at our mill.

t f MARION MILLING CO.

A Letter From East Prairie, Mo.

East Pairie, Mo., June 8, 1911.—Dear Editor—As I have left my dear old home in Kentucky, I will attempt to write a few lines to the dear old Record-Press.

I left Marion on the four o'clock train Saturday, May 27, 1911, and arrived at East Prairie Sunday about the same time. Had a right pleasant trip and made lot of new friends and as this was my second trip I met lot of old friends here.

The only thing I can say of any importance about this country now is that it is hot and dry. A little shower of rain fell Monday night, the first in nearly six weeks. Until then it was nearly impossible to walk in the sand.

Wheat harvesting is the order the day now. The crops look fine, very fine, considering the dry weather. There are between 400 and 600 acres of cotton planted around here this year.

For fear of the waste basket I will close. If this is in print I will write again. With much love and best wishes for the Record-Press and the dear old Kentucky people. Yours sicerely,

GRACE WALKER.

"Our baby cries for Chamberlain's Cough Remedy," writes Mrs. T. B. Kendrick, Rasaca, Ga. "It is the best cough remedy on the market for coughs, colds and croup." For sale by all dealers.

Babies' Fatal Malady

"Doctor, my baby sucks his fists continually. What is the matter with him?" "Madame, he has an advanced case of cheirophagy." "Mercy, shrieked the woman in terror, What is chierophagy?" "Why Madame it is only a desire to suck his fists."

—Toledo Blade.

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Yields readily to Dr. Bell's Antiseptic Salve. You see an improvement after the first application. We guarantee it. It is clean and pleasant to use. 25 cents a box.