

# Red Saunders

... By ...  
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"Why," cried Miss Mattie, pan in hand. "Do you weigh as much as that, Will?"

"I do," returned Red, with much satisfaction. "And there isn't over two pounds of it fat at that."

"What a great man you have grown up to be, Will!"

Red took in a deep draft of tobacco and sent the vapor clear across the little room.

"On the hay scales, yes," he answered, with a sort of joking earnestness, "but otherwise I don't know."

The return to the old home had touched the big man deeply, and as he leaned back in his chair there was a shade of melancholy on his face that became it well.

Miss Mattie took in the mass of him stretched out at his ease, his legs crossed, and the patrician cut of his face, to which the upturned moustache gave a cavalier touch. They were good stock, the Saunders, and the breed had not declined in the only two ex-

"He's my own cousin," she whispered to herself in the safety of the kitchen. "And such a splendid looking man!" She felt a pride of possession she had never known before. Nobody in Fairfield or vicinity had such a cousin as that. And Miss Mattie went on joyfully indulging an inherited instinct to minister to the wants of some man. She said to herself there was some satisfaction in cooking for somebody else. But black-a-day, Miss Mattie's ideas of the wants of somebody else had suffered a Fairfield change. Nothing was done on a large scale in Fairfield. But she sat the little cakes—lucky that she had made them yesterday—and the fried mush and the small pitcher of milk and the cold ham and the cold biscuit on the table with a pride in the appearance of the feast.

"Supper's ready, Will," she said.

Red responded instantly. He took a look at the board and understood. He ate the little cakes and biscuit and said they were the durned best he ever tasted. He also took some pot cheese under a misapprehension, swallowed it and felt to himself that he had been through worse things than that. Then, when his appetite had just begun to develop, the brigade on the provisions warned him that it was time to stop. Meanwhile they had ranged the fields of old times at random, and as Red took in Miss Mattie, pink with excitement and sparkling as to eyes, he thought, "Blast the supper! It's a square meal just to look at her. If she ain't pretty good people, I miss my guess."

It was a merry meal. He had such a way of telling things! Miss Mattie hadn't laughed so much for years, and she felt that there was no one that she had known so long and so well as Cousin Will. There was only one jarring note—Red spoke of the vigorous celebration that had been followed by the finding of gold. It was certainly well told, but Miss Mattie asked in soft horror when he had finished, "You didn't get intoxicated—Will?"

"Did I?" said he, lost in memory and not noticing the tone. "Well, I put my hand down the throat of that man's town and turned her inside out! It was like as if Christmas and Fourth of July had happened on the same day."

"Oh, Will," cried Miss Mattie, "I can't think of you like that—rolling in the gutter!" Her voice shook and broke off. Her knowledge of the effect of stimulants was limited to Fairfield's one drunkard—old Tommy McKee, a disreputable old Irishman—but drunkenness was the worst vice in her world.

"Rolling in the gutter!" cried Red in astonishment. "Why, girl, what for would I roll in the gutter? What's the fun in that? Jimmy Christmas! I wanted to walk on the telegraph wires. There wasn't anything in that town high enough for me. What put gutters into your head?"

"I—supposed people did that when they were—like that."

"I wouldn't waste my money on whisky if that's all the inspiration I got out of it," replied Red.

"Well, of course I don't know about those things, but I wish you'd promise me one thing."

"Done!" cried Red. "What is it?"

"I wish you'd promise me not to touch whisky again."

"Phew! That's a pretty big order!" He stopped and thought a minute. "If you'll make that never touch it when it ain't needed," leaving when it was needed to what's my idea of the square thing on a promise, I'll go you, Mattie. There's my hand!"

"Oh, I shouldn't have said anything at all, Will. I have no right, but it seemed such a pity such a splendid man—I mean—I think—You mustn't

promise me anything, Will," stammered Miss Mattie, shocked at her own dating.

"Here!" he cried, "I'm no little kid! When I promise I mean it! As for your not having any right, ain't we all there is? You've got to be mother and sister and aunt and everything to me. I ain't as young as I have been, Mattie, and I miss she-ways terrible at times. Now, put out your tin like a good pardner, and here goes for no more rhinestones for Chanta Seechee Red—time I quit drinking, anyhow." He slipped a ring off his little finger. "Here, hold out your hand," said he. "I'll put this on for luck and the sake of the promise—by the same token, I've got a noose on you now, and you're my property."

This of course was only Cousin Will's joking, but Miss Mattie noticed with a sudden hot flush that he had chosen the engagement finger—in all ignorance, she felt sure. The last thing she could do would be to call his attention to the fact or run the risk of hurting his feelings by transferring the ring; besides, it was a pretty ring, a rough ruby in a plain gold band—and looked very well where it was.

Then they settled down for what Red called a good medicine talk. Miss Mattie found herself boldly speaking of little families and notions that had remained in the inner shrine of her soul for years, shrinking from the matter-of-fact eye of Fairfield; yet this big, ferocious looking Cousin Will seemed to find them both sane and interesting, and as her self respect went up in the arithmetical admiration for Cousin Will went up in the geometrical ratio. He frankly admitted weaknesses and fears that the males of Fairfield would have rejected scornfully.

Miss Mattie spoke of sleeping upstairs, because she could not rid herself of the fear of somebody coming in.

"I know just how you feel about that," said Red. "My hair used to be on its feet most of the time when we were in the hay camp at the lake beds. Gee whizz! The rattlers! We put hair ropes around—but them rattlers liked to squirm over hair ropes for exercise. One morning I woke up and there was a crawler on my chest. 'For God's sake, Pete!' says I to Antelope Pete, who was rolled up next me, 'come take my friend away!' and I didn't holler very loud neither. Pete was chain lightning in pants, and he grabs Mr. Rattler by the tail and snaps his neck, but I felt lonesome in my inside till dinner time. You bet! I know just how you feel exactly. I didn't have a man's sized night's rest while we was in that part of the country."

It struck Miss Mattie that the cases were hardly parallel. "A rattlesnake on your chest, Will?" she cried, with her hands clasped in terror.

"Oh, it wasn't as bad as it sounds. He was asleep, coiled up there to get warm—sharpish nights on the prairie in August—but darn it, Mattie," wrinkling up his nose in disgust, "I hate the sight of the brutes!"

"But you wouldn't be afraid of a man, Will?"

"Well, no," admitted he. "I've never been troubled much that way. You see, everybody has a different fear to throw a crimp in them. Mine's rattlesnakes and these little bugs with forty million pairs of legs. I pass right out when I see one of them things. They give me a feeling as if my stummock had melted."

"Weren't the Indians terrible out there, too?" asked Miss Mattie. "I'm sure they must have been."

"Oh, they ain't bad people if you use 'em right," said Red. "Not that I like 'em any better on the ground than in it," he added hastily, fearful of betraying the sentiment of his country, "but I never had but one real argument man to man, Black Wolf and I come together over a matter of who owned my cayuse, and from words we backed off and got to shooting. He raked me from knee to hip, as I was kneeling down, doing the best I could by him and wasting ammunition because I was in a hurry. Still, I did bust his ankle. In the middle of the fuss a stray shot hit the cayuse in the head, and he croaked without a remark, so there we were, a pair of fools miles from home with nothing left to quarrel about! You could have fried an egg on a rock that day, and it always makes you thirsty to get shot anyways serious, thinking of which I hollered peace to old Black Wolf and told him I'd pull straws with him to see who took my cayuse down to the creek and got some fresh water. He was agreeable and we hunched up to each other. It ain't to my credit to say it, but I was worse hurt than that

cup, so I worked him. He got the short straw, and had to crawl a mile through cactus, while I sat comfortable on the cause of the disagreement and yelled to him that he looked like a badger and other things that an Injun wouldn't feel was a compliment." Red leaned back and roared. "I can see him now putting his hands down so careful and turning back every once in awhile to cuss me. Turned out that it was his cayuse too. Feller that sold it to me had stole it from him. I oughtn't to laugh over it, but I can't help but sneaker when I think how I did that Injun."

Generally speaking, Miss Mattie had a lively sense of humor, but the joke of this was lost on her. Her education had been that getting shot was far from funny.

"Why, I should have thought you would have died, Will!"

"What! For a little crack in the leg?" cried Red, with some impatience. "You people must quit easy in this country. Die nothin'. One of our boys came along and took us to camp, and we was up and doing again in no time. 'Course, Black Wolf has a game leg for good, but the worst that's stuck to me is a yank or two of rheumatism in the rainy season. I paid Wolf for his cayuse," he finished shamefacedly. "I had the laugh on him anyhow."

Miss Mattie told him she thought that was noble of him, which tribute Red took as medicine and shifted the subject with speed to practical affairs. He asked Miss Mattie how much money she had and how she managed to make out. Now, it was one of the canons of good manners in Fairfield not to speak of material matters, perhaps because there was so little material matter in the community, but Miss Mattie, doomed to a thousand irksome petty economies, had often longed for a sympathetic ear to pour into it a good honest complaint of having to do this and that. She could not exactly go this far with Cousin Will, but she could say it was pretty hard to get along and gave some details. She felt that she knew him so very well in those few hours! Red heard with nods of assent. He had scented the conditions at once.

"It ain't any fun skidding on the thin ice," said he when they had concluded the talk. "I've had to count the beans I put in the pot, and it made me hate arithmetic worse than when I went over yonder to school. Well, them days have gone by for you, Mattie." He reached down and, pulling out a green roll, slapped it on the center table. "Blow that in and limber up and remember that there's more behind it."

Miss Mattie's pride rose at a leap. "Will," she said, "I hope you don't think I've told you this to get money from you."

He leaned forward, put his hand on her shoulder and held her eyes with a sudden access of sternness and authority.

"And I hope, Mattie," said he, "that you don't think that I think anything of the kind."

The cousins stared into each other's eyes for a full minute; then Miss Mattie spoke. "No, Will," said she, "I don't believe you do."

"I shouldn't think I did," retorted Red. "What in thunder would I do with all that money? Why, good Lord, girl, I could paper your house with \$10 bills! Now you try to fly them green kites, like I tell you."

Miss Mattie broke down. The not fully realized strain of fifteen years had made itself felt when the cool snip-ped. "I don't know how to thank you. I don't know what to say. Oh, Will, it seems too good to be true!"

"What you crying about, Mattie?" said he, in rare distress. "Now hold on! Listen to me a minute! There's something I want you to do for me."

"What is it?" she asked, drying her eyes.

"For dinner tomorrow," he replied, "let's have a roast of beef—out that size," indicating a washtub.

The diversion was complete. "Why, Will! What would we ever do with it?" said she.

"Do with it? Why, eat it!"

"But we couldn't eat all that!"

"Then throw what's left to the cats."

You ain't going to fall down on me the first favor I ask?" with mock seriousness.

"You shall have the roast of beef. 'Pears to me that you're fond of your stomach, Will," said Miss Mattie, with a recovering smile.

"I have a good stomach that's always done the right thing by me when I've done the right thing by it," said Red. "And, moreover, just look at the constitution I have to support. But say, old lady, look at that!" pointing to the clock. "Eleven-thirty; time decent people were putting up for the night."

The words brought to an acute stage a wandering fear which had passed through Miss Mattie's mind at intervals during the evening. Where was she to look for sleeping accommodations for a man? She revolted against the convention that in her own mind as well as the rest of Fairfield forbade the use of her house for the purpose. Long habit of thought had made these niceties constitutional. It was almost as difficult for Miss Mattie to say "I'll fix up your bed right there on the sofa" as it would have been for Red to

pick a man's pocket, yet when she thought of his instant and open generosity and what a dismal return therefor it would be to thrust him out for reasons which she divined would have no meaning for him, she heroically resolved to throw custom to the winds and speak.

But the difficulty was cut in another fashion.

"There's a little barn in the backyard that caught my eye," said Red. "and if you'll lend me a blanket I'll roll it out there."

"Sleep in the barn! You'll not do any such thing!" cried Miss Mattie. "You'll sleep right here on the sofa or upstairs in my bed, just as you choose."

"If it's all the same to you, I'd rather not. So help me Bob, I'd smother in here. Had the darndest time coming out that ever was—hotels. Little white rooms with the walls coming in on you. Worse than rattlesnakes for keeping a man awake. Reminds me of the hospital. Horse fell on me once and smashed me up so that I had to be sent to get put up again, and I never struck such a month as that since I was born. The doc told me I mustn't move, but I told him I'd chuck him out of the window if he tried to stop me, and up I got. I'd have gone dead sure if they'd held me a week more. I speak for the barn, Mattie, and I speak real loud; that is, I mean to say I'm going to sleep in the barn, unless there's somebody a heap larger than you on the premises. Now, there's no use for you to talk—I'm going to do just as I say."

"Well, I think that's just dreadful!" said Miss Mattie. "I'd like to know what folks will think of me to hear I turned my own cousin out in the barn." Her voice trailed off a little at the end as the gist of what they might say if he stayed in the house occurred to her. "Well," she continued, "if you're set I suppose I can't object." Miss Mattie was not a good hand at playing a part.

"I'm set," said Red. "Get me a blanket." As she came in with this he added, "Say, Mattie, could you let me have a loaf of bread? I've got a habit of wanting something to eat in the middle of the night."

"Certainly! Don't you want some butter with it? Here, I'll fix it for you on a plate."

"No, don't waste dish washing. I'll show you how to fix it." He cut the loaf of bread in half, pulled out a portion of the soft part and filled the hole with butter. "There we are, and nothing to bother with afterward."

"That's a right smart notion, Will, but you'll want a knife."

In answer he drew out a leather case from his breast pocket and opened it.



Miss Mattie stood in the half-opened door and listened.

Within was knife, fork, spoon and two flat boxes for salt and pepper. "You see, I'm fixed," said he.

"Isn't that a cute trick?" she cried admiringly. "You're ready for most anything."

"Sure," said Red. "Now, good night, old lady." He bent down in so natural a fashion that Miss Mattie had kissed him before she knew what she was going to do.

Down to the barn, through the soft June evening, went Red, whistling a Mexican love song most melodiously.

Miss Mattie stood in the half-opened door and listened. Without was balm and starlight, and the spirit of flowers breathed out in odors. The quaint and pretty tune rose and fell, quavered, lilted along as it listed without regard for law and order. It struck Miss Mattie to the heart. Her girlhood, with its misty dreams of happiness, came back to her on the wings of music.

"Isn't that a sweet tune?" she said, with a lump in her throat.

She went up into her room and sat down a moment in confusion, trying to grasp the reality of all that had happened. In the middle of the belief that these things were not so came the regret of a sensitive mind for errors committed. She remembered, with a sudden sinking, that she had not thanked him for the necklace. And the mon-

ey lay even now on the parlor table where he had cast it! This added the physical fear of thieves. Down she went and got the money, counted out to her unmitigated astonishment, \$500 and thrust it beneath her pillow, with a shiver. She wished she had thought to tell him to take care of it. But suppose the thieves were to fall on him as he slept? Red's friends would have spent their sympathy on the thieves. She rejoiced that the money was where it was. Then she tried to remember what she had said throughout the evening.

"Well, I suppose I must have acted like a ninny," she concluded. "But isn't he just splendid!" And as Cousin Will's handsome face, with its darling, kind eyes, came to her vision she felt comforted. "I don't believe but what he'll make every allowance for how excited I was," said she. "He seems to understand those things for all he's such a large man. Well, it doesn't seem as if it could be true." With a half sigh, Miss Mattie knelt and sent up her modest petition to her Maker and got into her little white bed.

In the meantime Red's notions would have awakened suspicion. He hunted around until he found a tin can, then lit a match and ruminated the barn amid terror-stricken squawks from the inhabitants, the hens.

"One, two, three, four," he counted. "Reckon I can last out till morning on that. Mattie, she's white people just the nicest I ever saw—but she ain't used to providing for a full grown man."

He stepped to the back of the barn and looked about him. "Nobody can see me from here," he said in satisfaction. Then he scamped together a pile of chips and sticks and built a fire, filled the tin can at the brook, set it on two stones over the fire, rolled himself a cigarette and waited. A large, yellow toment came out of the brush and threw his green headlights on him, meowing tentatively.

"Hello, pussy!" said Red. "You hungry too? Well, just wait a minute and we'll help that feeling. Like bread, pussy?" The cat gobbled the morsel greedily, came closer and begged for more. The tin can boiled over. Red popped the eggs in, puffed his cigarette to a bright coal and looked at his watch by the light. "Gee! Ten minutes more now," said he. "Hardly seems to me as if I could wait." He pulled the watch out several times. "What's the matter with the de-d thing? I believe it's stopped," he growled. But at last "Time!" he shouted gleefully, kicked the can over and gathered up its treasures in his handkerchief.

"Now, Mr. Cat, we're going to do some real eating," said he. "Just sit right down and make yourself at home. This is kind of fun, by Jinks!" Down went the eggs, and down went the loaf of bread in generous slices, never forgetting a fair share for the cat.

"Woosh! I feel better!" cried Red. "And now for some sleep." He swung up into the hayloft, spread the blanket on the still fragrant old hay and rolled himself up in a trice.

"I did a good turn when I came on here," he mused. "If I have got only one relation, she's a dandy—so pretty and quiet and nice. She's a marker for all I've got, is Mattie."

The cat came up, purring and "mucking bread." He sniffed feline fashion at Red's face.

"Fool! Shoo! Go 'way, pussy! Settle yourself down and we'll pound our ear for another forty miles. I like you first rate when you don't walk on my face." He stretched and yawned enormously. "Yes, sir, Mattie's all right!" said he. "A-a-a-all right!" And Chanta Seechee Red was in the land of dreams. Here, back in God's country, within twenty miles of the place where he was born, the wanderer laid him down again, and in spite of raid and foray, whisky and poker cards, wear and tear, hard times and, hardest test of all, sudden fortune, he was much the same impulsive, honest, generous, devil-may-care boy who had left there twenty-four years ago.

[To be continued.]

To Stop Hiccough.

Hiccoughing can be stopped by sneezing. A physician says he has successfully cured a case of persistent hiccough by tickling the patient's nose. It is not necessary that the stimulus applied to the nose be followed by sneezing, the application of a moist irritant to the nasal mucous membrane being sufficient to divert the nervous energy into other channels. —New York Press.

"George, I saw that Singletoe wear an today carrying the silk umbrella that she borrowed from me at the club card party."

"Why didn't you ask for it?"

"I was just going to when I remembered that I borrowed it from Mrs. Trumper." —Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Mrs. Lapsing was exhibiting to the caller the latest addition to her stock of household remedies.

"I have a good deal of faith in this medicine," she averred. "I got it from the hypoecary himself, and he said he'd never known it to fail." —Chicago Tribune.

Hemp is a Philippine natural monopoly. It cannot be grown profitably in any other part of the world. The United States is the largest consumer.