THE GIRL AT THE HALFWAY HOUSE

A STORY OF THE PLAINS

BY E. HOUGH, AUTHOR OF THE STORY OF THE COWBOY

CHAPTER XIX.

Bill Watson.

The sheriff of Ellisville sat in his office oiling the machinery of the law; which is to say, cleaning his revolver. There was not yet any courthouse. The sheriff was the law. Twelve new mounds on the hillside back of the Cottage Hotel showed how faithfully he had executed his duties as judge and jury since he had taken up his office at the beginning of the "cow boom" of Ellisville. His right hand had found somewhat to do, and he had done it with his might.

Ellisville was near the zenith of its bad eminence. The entire country had gone broad-horn. Money being free, whisky was not less so. The bar of the Cottage was lined perpetually. Wild men from the range rode their horses up the steps and into the barroom demanding to be served as they sat in the saddle, as gentlemen should. Glass was too tempting to the six-shooters of these enthusiasts, and the barkeeper begged the question by stowing away the fragments of his mirror and keeping most of his bottles out of sight. More than once he was asked to hold up a bottle of whisky so that some cow-puncher might prove his skill by shooting the neck off from the flask. The bartender was taciturn and at times glum, but his face was the only one at the bar that showed any irritation or sadness. This railroad town was a bright, new thing for the horsemen of the trail—a very joyous thing. No funeral could check their hilarity; no whisky could daunt their throats, long seared with alkali.

It was notorious that after the civil war human life was held very cheap all over America, it having been seen how small a thing is a man, how little missed may be a million men taken bodily from the population. Nowhere was life cheaper than on the frontier, and at no place on that frontier of less value than at this wicked little city.

The sheriff of Ellisville looked thoughtful as he tested the machinery of the law. He had a warrant for a new bad man who had come up from

"Any trouble?"

the Indian nations, and who had celebrated his first day in town by shooting two men who declined to get off the sidewalk, so that he could ride his horse more comfortably there.

Bill Watson, the sheriff of Ellisville, was a heavily built man, sandy haired, red-mustached, and solid. His legs were bowed and his carriage awkward. He had thick, clumsy looking fingers, whose appearance belied their deftness. Bill Watson had gone through the Quantrell raid in his time. It was nothing to him when he was to be killed. Such a man is careful in his shooting, because he is careless of being shot, having therefore a vast advantage over the desperado of two or three victims, who does not yet accept the fact that his own days are numbered. The only trouble in regard to this new bad man from below was that his mental attitude on this point was much the same as that of Sheriff Bill Watson. Therefore the sheriff was extremely careful about the oiling of the cylinder.

He finished the cleaning of his six-shooter and tossed the oiled rag into the drawer of the table where he kept the warrants. He slipped the heavy weapon into the scabbard at his right leg and saw that the string held the scabbard firmly to his trouser leg, so that he might draw the gun smoothly and without hindrance from its sheath. He was a simple, unpretentious man; not a heroic figure as he stood, his weight resting on the sides of his feet, looking out of the window down the long and wind-swept street of Ellisville.

Gradually the gaze of the sheriff focused, becoming occupied with the figure of a horseman whose steady riding seemed to have a purpose other than that of merely showing his joy in living and riding. This rider passed other riders without pausing. He came up the street at a gallop until opposite the office door, where he jerked up his horse sharply and sprang from the saddle.

"Mornin', Bill," he said.

"Mornin', Curly," said the sheriff pleasantly. "Lookin' for a doctor? You're ridin' perty fast."

"Nope," said Curly. "Reckon it's a shade too late for a doctor."

The sheriff was gravely silent. After a while he said, quietly:

"Any trouble?"

"Yep. Plenty."

"Who?"

"Why, it's Cal Greathouse. You know Cal. Last week he goes off west a ways, a-lookin' fer some winter range that won't be so crowded. He goes alone. Now, to-day his horse comes back, draggin' his lariat. We 'lowed we better come tell you. O' course, they ain't no horse gettin' away f'm Cal Greathouse, not if he's alive."

The sheriff fell into thought, slowly chewing at a splinter. "I'll tell you," he said at length, slowly, "I kain't very well git away right now. You go over an' git Cap Franklin. He's a good man. Pick up somebody else you want to go along with you, an' then you start out on Cal's trail, near as you can git at it. You better take along that d——d Greaser o' yorn, that big Juan, fer he kin run trail like a houn'. You stop at all the outfits you come to, fer say fifty miles. Don't do nothin' more'n ask, an' then go on. If you come to a outfit that hain't seen him, an' then another outfit furder on that has seen him, you remember the one that hain't. If you don't git no track in fifty mile, swing around to the southeast, an' cut the main drive trail an' see if you hear of anything thataway. If you don't git no trace by that, you better come on back in an' tell me, an' then we'll see what to do about it furder."

"All right, Bill," said Curly, rising and taking a chew of tobacco, in which the sheriff joined him. "All right. You got any papers fer us to take along?"

"Papers?" said the sheriff contemptuously. "Papers? Hell!"

* * * * *

Ike Anderson was drunk—calmly, magnificently, satisfactorily drunk. It had taken time, but it was a fact accomplished. The actual state of affairs was best known to Ike Anderson himself, and not obvious to the passer-by. Ike Anderson's gaze might have been hard, but it was direct. His walk was perfectly decorous and straight, his brain perfectly clear, his hand perfectly steady. Only, somewhere deep down in his mind there burned some little, still, blue flame of devilishness, which left Ike Anderson not a human being, but a skillful, logical and murderous animal.

"This," said Ike Anderson to himself all the time, "this is little Ike Anderson, a little boy, playing. I can see the green fields, the pleasant meadows, the little brook that crossed them. I remember my mother gave me bread and milk for my supper, always. My sister washed my bare feet, when I was a little, little boy." He paused and leaned one hand against a porch post, thinking. "A little, little boy," he repeated to himself.

"No, it isn't," he thought. "It's Ike Anderson, growing up. He's playing tag. The boy tripped him and laughed at him, and Ike Anderson got out his knife." He cast a red eye about him.

"No, it isn't," he thought. "It's Ike Anderson, with the people chasing him. And the shotgun. Ike's growing up faster, growing right along. They all want him, but they don't get him. One, two, three, five, nine, eight, seven—I could count them all once. Ike Anderson. No mother. No sweetheart. No home. Moving, moving. But they never scared him yet—Ike Anderson. . . . I never took any cattle!"

An impulse to walk seized him, and he did so, quietly, steadily, until he met a stranger, a man whose clothing bespoke his residence in another region.

"Good morning, gentle sir," said Ike.

"Good morning, friend," said the other, smiling.

"Gentle sir," said Ike, "just lemme look at you watch a minute, won't you, please?"

Laughingly the stranger complied, suspecting only that his odd accoster might have tarried too long over his cups. Ike took the watch in his hand, looked at it gravely for a moment, then gave it a jerk that broke the chain, and dropped it into his own pocket.

"I like it," said he simply, and passed on. The stranger followed, about to use violence, but caught sight of a white-faced man, who through a window vehemently beckoned him to pause.

Ike Anderson stepped into a saloon and took a straw from a glass standing on the bar, exercising an exact and critical taste in its selection. "I'm very thirsty," he remarked plaintively. Saying which, he shot a hole in a barrel of whisky, inserted the straw, and drank lingeringly.

"Thank you," he said softly, and shot the glass of straws off the counter. "Thank you. Not after me." The whisky ran out over the floor, out of the door, over the path and into the road, but no one raised a voice in rebuke.

The blue flame burned a trifle higher in Ike Anderson's brain. He was growing very much intoxicated, and therefore very quiet and very sober-looking. He did not yell and flourish his revolvers, but walked along decently, engaged in thought. He passed by the front of the Cottage Hotel. A negro boy, who worked about the place, was sweeping idly at the porch door, shuffling lazily about at his employment. Ike paused and looked amiably at him for some moments.

"Good morning, colored scion," he said pleasantly.

"Mawnin', boss," said the negro, grinning widely.

"Colored scion," said Ike, "hereafter—to oblige me—would you mind whoopin' it up with yore broom a leetle faster?"

The negro scowled and muttered, and the next moment sprang sprawling forward with a scream. Ike had shot off the heel of his shoe, in the process not sparing all of the foot. The negro swept as he had never swept before. Twice a bullet cut the floor at his feet, and at last the stick of the broom was shattered in his hand. "Colored scion," said Ike Anderson, as though in surprise, "yore broom is damaged. Kneel down and pray for another." The negro knelt and surely prayed.

On all sides swept the wide and empty streets. It was Ike Anderson's town. A red film seemed to his gaze to come over the face of things. He slipped his revolver back into the scabbard and paused again to think. A quick footstep sounded on the walk behind him, and he wheeled, still puzzled with the red film and the mental problem.

The sheriff stood quietly facing him, with his thumbs resting lightly in his belt. He had not drawn his own revolver. He was chewing a splinter. "Ike," said he, "throw up your hands."

The nerves of some men act more quickly than those of others, and such men make the most dangerous pistol shots, when they have good digestion and long practice at the rapid drawing of the revolver, an art at that time much cultivated. Ike Anderson's mind and nerves and muscles were always lightning-like in the instantaneous rapidity of their action. The eye could scarce have followed the movement by which the revolver leaped to a level from his right-hand scabbard. He had forgotten, in his moment of study, that with his six-shooter he had fired once at the whisky barrel, once at the glass of straws, once at the negro's heel, twice at the floor, and once at the broomstick. The click on the empty shell was heard clearly at the hotel bar, distinctly ahead of the double report that followed. For, such was the sharpness of this man's mental and muscular action, he had dropped the empty revolver from his right hand and drawn the other with his left hand in time to meet the fire of the sheriff.

(To be continued.)

A EULOGY ON SIN.

Woman's Declaration That It Is All Worth Living For.

The Paris correspondent of the London Globe tells a curious story of a certain English writer . . . who had always, before he came to a most disastrous end, been famous for his want of balance." This individual appears to have come by his defect naturally enough, to judge from the portrait of his mother sketched by one of his friends. The writer once took that friend to see the lady in question and this is the way in which the interview is described:

"It was a beautiful sunny day in June, the sort of day when all normal people want to be out of doors. We went to a pretty house in London, and were ushered into a drawing room, the shutters and curtains of which were all carefully closed, the gas being lighted, and where there was a sickening smell of some very strong perfume. Crouched in a large chair was the most terrible looking old dame, with long, skinny hands and glittering black eyes. She gave me a claw to shake and looked at me fixedly. 'Young man,' said she, 'I don't know why you come to see an old woman like me, but I can give you some excellent advice. Remember this. There is only one thing on earth worth living for, and that is sin.'"

A Child's Definitions.

The late Frederic R. Coudert, lawyer and wit, had a great fondness for children. He collected indefatigably the quaint sayings of children, and one of the treasures of his library was a small manuscript volume filled with definitions that children had composed. This volume was called a "child's dictionary," and these are some of the definitions that Mr. Coudert would read from it:

"Dust—Mud with the juice squeezed out of it.

"Snoring—Letting off sleep.

"Apples—The bubbles that apple trees blow.

"Back biter—a mosquito.

"Fan—A thing to brush the warm off with.

"Ice—Water that went to sleep in the cold."

LIVE STOCK

Rabies.

The following is from a circular sent out by the Kansas Experiment station:

Rabies does not occur most frequently during hot weather, as is generally believed, the greatest losses occurring during the fall and spring, but it may occur at any season of the year. The disease seems to appear periodically, some years no outbreaks being reported, and other years the losses are frequent and severe. Rabies is a disease of the nervous system that is transmitted from one animal to another by direct inoculation through a wound, usually a bite from a rabid animal. It is possible that food or water contaminated by an animal affected with rabies may infect animals having sores in the mouth or digestive tract, or the infected saliva being deposited upon an open wound or irritated mucous membrane may cause the disease.

The disease as observed during the year 1902 was among cattle, except in one instance, where two horses died. The loss among the cattle varied from five to twenty-seven head. In one herd of sixteen head, eleven died from rabies. In four out of the seven outbreaks reported, a dog supposed to be rabid was known to have bitten or been among the affected cattle. The disease usually occurs in from five to ten days after the animals are bitten, and, among cattle, they may continue to develop the disease for from eight to ten weeks after the first case occurs.

The symptoms vary considerably even among cattle. The affected animal becomes nervous and excited, in many cases vicious, attacking persons and smaller animals, particularly. In some instances they will dash at a person but suddenly stop a few feet away. There is a peculiar wild or vacant stare. Affected cattle will often push and maul other animals in the herd, and there is a tendency to lick the genital organs of other cattle. As the disease progresses they become more excited and will often emit a hoarse bellow frequently or almost continuously. In many cases there is often violent straining as if to pass dung, the rectum often being everted. Paralysis often occurs, and is first noticed in a wobbling, uncertain gait, and later the hind quarters give way and the animal is unable to rise. In a few cases the animals will fall in convulsions. In all cases animals will eat and drink water until paralysis of the throat makes it difficult or impossible. There is frequent shaking and swinging of the head and opening of the jaws, with dripping of a ropy or frothy saliva from the mouth. There is a tendency for rabid animals to eat dirt, dung, stocks, etc.

Post-mortem examination shows no signs of disease, although the body is unusually stiff and rigid and the stomach contains dirt and other foreign material. There is no treatment for rabid animals, as death always occurs. Affected animals should be isolated, or destroyed at once to put them out of misery, and to prevent possible infection of others. Water tanks and mangers should be emptied and thoroughly disinfected by using a strong solution of concentrated lye, or a five per cent solution of carbolic acid. Food contaminated with saliva should be burned. Suspected dogs should be destroyed. Persons should exercise utmost caution to avoid being bitten or infected through wounds on the hands while caring for infected animals.

Consumption of Water by Horses.

In a number of feeding experiments carried on with horses at the experiment stations in the United States the amount of water consumed has been recorded. In tests at the New Hampshire station, in which the ration consisted of different grain mixtures, with timothy hay and corn fodder, it was found that the quantity of water consumed varied from 70.94 pounds to 90.4 pounds per horse per day. It was observed that both the ration consumed and the amount of work performed influenced the quantity of water drunk, although the individuality of the horse had the most marked effect. The amount of water consumed by horses on rations of timothy hay and alfalfa hay (with oats) was studied at the Utah station. It was found that on an average larger amounts were consumed with the latter than with the former, the average amounts per day being some 78.51 and 88.85 pounds, respectively. The greater consumption of water on the alfalfa ration induced a greater elimination by the kidneys, but so far as could be observed this was not attended by any bad results nor was it found inconvenient. At the Oklahoma station a pair of mules during hot summer weather, drank 113 pounds of water per head daily, and on one day the pair drank 350 pounds. On an average a pair of mules and horses, each weighing 2,130 pounds, drank 107 pounds of water per head per day while at moderate work. In these tests the grain ration consisted of Kafir corn, maize, oats and bran.—Bulletin 125, Department of Agriculture.

The Growing Lambs.

A. G. Gamley of Manitoba, in an address to farmers said: By the time the lambs are a month old the spring will have come; and if all has gone well with the shepherd and his flock, it ought to be in good shape to commence the summer operations. For a week or two feed them a few oat sheaves before they go out in the morning, and the same in the evening when they come in, also hay in their racks for night, if they will eat it. They will eat very little hay at this time, but it helps to keep them up until they get a full bite of grass. From now till clipping time the shepherd will have it a little easier, and well he deserves it, for if his flock is a large one, he will have been hard at work 24 hours a day all through the lambing time. Shearing ought to be done between the middle of May and 1st of June. Until the wool has grown give them the run of the pens at night to protect them from the cold, also during the day, to protect them from the sun. Dip ten days after clipping, and ten days after that again, to kill the ticks that have hatched since the first dipping. Weaning time comes in August or September, according to the time the lamb was dropped.

The ewe lambs may be kept separate for a week or ten days, and then turned in with the flock again, care having been taken in the interval to milk the ewes, at least twice in that time, and the heaviest milkers, as often as required. The ram lambs, if bred for the butcher, and to be sold as lambs, had better be sold as soon as weaned, as they will fall rapidly if no special provision has been made for their care, such as a field of rape or turnips to run in during the day and hay and grain at night. Care should be taken not to allow them in the rape with an empty stomach until the frost is off in the morning, and then not too long at a time, until they get accustomed to it. At weaning time, and while the ewes are being handled, it is a wise plan to mark those that are to be disposed of to the butcher. In this connection I would impress on the young breeder that the successful management of the flock, in a great measure, depends on these things: First, the choice of a ram; second, eternal vigilance at lambing time; and third, culling closely each year. Don't keep an old ewe or those not typical of the breed; don't be afraid to weed them out.

Meat as Seen by the Butcher.

At the last meeting of the Illinois Live Stock Breeders' Association, held at the Illinois Agricultural college, several hundred people gathered in the animal judging room to witness the meat-cutting demonstration. Mr. Samuel White, a Chicago butcher, made the demonstration. The standard rib roast (including seven ribs) is the part that is injured most by being too fat. Much of the tenderloin used in hotels and restaurants is taken from "canners," as the butcher can't afford to sell the tenderloin from high-priced meat, as it forms the best part of the porterhouse. In America the choice cuts sell at a high price because there is little demand for the rest of the carcass. Porterhouse and sirloin can be bought cheaper in England than in the United States because there is a greater demand for the other parts of the carcass. Chuck brings about 6 cents per pound in Chicago and 15 cents in London, while porterhouse brings 25 cents in Chicago and from 15 to 20 cents per pound in London. The American butcher has to make his profits from a small part of the carcass, while the English butcher makes his profits from all parts of the carcass. Porterhouse steak is an American term and is not generally known in England.

Room for the Litters.

A swine breeder says that in raising pigs one should have a house and separate lot for each sow and her litter. This may be demanding a little too much, but it may be that the best results can be obtained only in this way. If one cannot give a separate lot to each sow, he can at least give a separate house. Fortunately a hog house need not cost much. Some of our experiment stations have a house for each brood sow, but give them only one large lot, in which to run. While the pigs are so young that they take only their mother's milk it is better to keep the litters separate, but when the pigs have become old enough to eat slop made of milk, ship stuff and the like, the litters may be allowed to run together.

How Nature Prunes.

While the trees are pushing up most rapidly, the side branches are most quickly overshaded, and the process of natural pruning goes on with the greatest vigor. Natural pruning is the reason why old trees in a dense forest have only a small crown high in the air, and why their tall trunks are clear of branches to such a height from the ground. The trunks of trees grown in the open, where even the lower limbs have abundance of light are branched either quite to the ground or to within a short distance of it. But in the forest not only are the lower side branches continually dying for want of light, but the tree rids itself of them after they are dead and so frees its trunk from them entirely. When a branch dies, the annual layer of new wood is no longer deposited upon it. Consequently the dead branch, where it is inserted in the tree, makes a little hole in the first coat of living tissue formed over the live wood after its death. The edges of this hole make a sort of collar about the base of the head branch, and as a new layer is added each year they press it more and more tightly. So strong does this compression of the living wood become that at last what remains of the dead tissue has so little strength that the branch is broken off by a storm or even falls of its own weight. Then in a short time, if all goes well, the hole closes, and after awhile little or no exterior trace of it remains. Knots, such as those which are found in boards, are the marks left in the trunk by branches which have disappeared.—Gifford Pinchot.

Putting one's shoulder to the wheel may bruise and hurt, but it works its own gold cure.

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The conflict with self and selfishness must be fought out.—George Dawson.

It's a pity men can't postpone their trials as easily as a lawyer can stave them off in court.