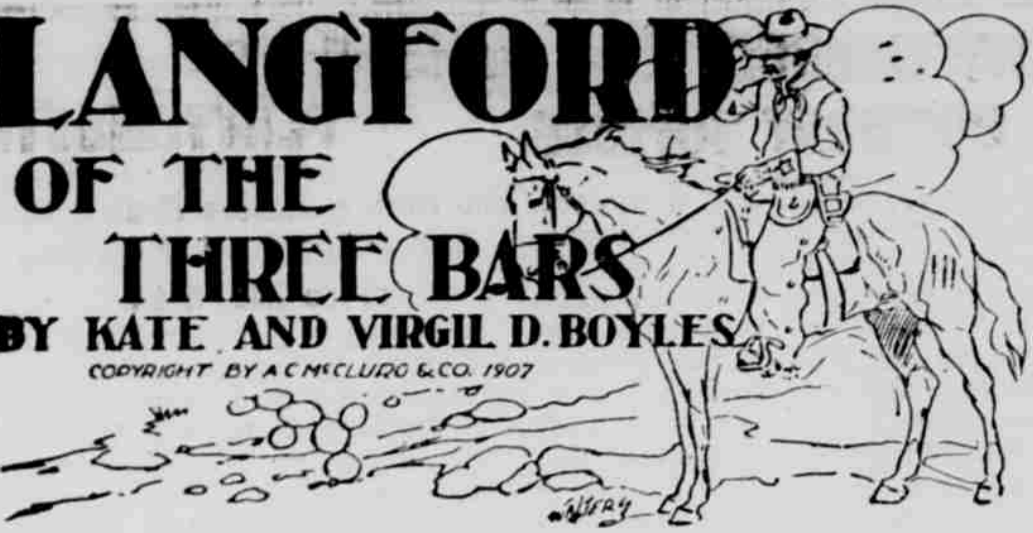


# LANGFORD

## OF THE THREE BARS

BY KATE AND VIRGIL D. BOYLES

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naturally. "But it does beat the band, Jim, now doesn't it, how you people scare at petticoats. They ain't pizen honest."

Jim looked on idly. Occasionally he condescended to head a rebellious steer seawards. Out beyond it was still and sweet and peaceful, and the late afternoon had put on that thin veil of coolness which is a God-given refreshment after the heat of the day. But here in the pen all was confusion. The raucous cattle-calls of the cowboys smote the evening air startlingly.

"Here, Bill Brown!" he exclaimed suddenly, "where did you run across that critter?" He slapped the shoulder of a big, raw-boned, long-eared steer as he spoke. The animal was on the point of being driven up the chute.

"What you want to know for?" asked Brown in surprise.

"Reason nough. That critter belongs to us, that's why; and I want to know where you got him, that's what I want to know."

"You're crazy, Jim! Why, I bought that fellow from Jesse Black 't' other day. I've got a bill of sale for him. I'm shippin' a couple of cars to Sioux City and bought him to send along. That's on the square."

"I don't doubt it—'s far as you're concerned, Bill Brown," said Jim, "but that's our critter just the same, and I'll jest tote 'im along if you've no objections."

"Well, I guess not!" said Brown, laconically.

"Look here, Bill Brown," Jim was getting hot headedly angry, "didn't you know Jesse Black stands trial tomorrow for rustlin' that there very critter from the Three Bars ranch?"

"No, I didn't," Brown answered shortly. "Any case?"

"I guess yes! Williston o' the Lazy S saw this very critter on that island where Jesse Black holds out." He proceeded to relate minutely the story to which Williston was going to swear on the morrow. "But," he concluded, "Jesse's goin' to fight like hell against bein' bound over."

"Well, well," said Brown, perplexed. "But the brand, Jim, it's not yours or Jesse's either."

"Quainted with any J R ranch in these parts?" queried Jim, shrewdly. "I ain't."

"Well, neither am I," confessed Brown, "but that's not sayin' there ain't one somewhere. Maybe we can trace it back."

"Shucks!" exploded Jim. "Maybe you're right, Jim, but I don't propose to lose the price of that animal less'n I have to. You can't blame me for that. I paid good money for it. If it's your'n, why, of course, it's your'n. But I want to be sure first. Sure you'd know him, Jim? How could you be so blamed sure? Your boss must range 50,000 head."

"Know him? Know Mag? I'd know Mag of my eyes were full o' soundin' cataracts. He's an old and tried friend o' mine. The meanest critter the Lord ever let live and that's a fact. But the boss calls 'im his maggot. Seems to actually cherish a kind o' affection for the ornery critter, and says the luck o' the Three Bars would s'er o' peak and pine of he should ever git rid o' the pesky brute. Maybe he's right. Leastwise, the critter's his, and when a thing's yours, why, it's yours and that's all there is about it. By crack, the boss is some mad! You'd think him and that wall-eyed, cross-grained son-of-a-gun had been kind and lovin' mates these many years. Well, I ain't met up with this ornery critter for some time. Hullo, there, Mag! Look kind o' sneakin', now, don't you, wearin' that outlandish and unbeknownst J R?"

Bill Brown thoughtfully surveyed the steer whose ownership was thus so unexpectedly disputed.

"You hold him," insisted Jim. "Ef he ain't ours, you can send him along with your next shipment, can't you? What you wobblin' about? Ain't afraid the boss 'll claim what ain't his, are you, Bill Brown?"

"Well, I can't help myself, I guess," said Brown, in a tone of voice which told plainly of his laudable effort to keep his annoyance in subjection to his good fellowship. "You send Langford down here first thing in the morning. If he says the critter's his'n that ends it."

Now that he had convinced his quondam acquaintance, the present shipper, to his entire satisfaction, Jim glanced at his watch with ostentatious ease. His time had come. If all the minutes of all the time to come should be as short as those 40 had been, how soon he, Jim Munson, cow puncher, would have ridden them all into the past. But his "get away" must be clean and dignified.

"Likely bunch you have there," he said, casually, turning away with unassumed reluctance.

"Fair to middlin'," said Brown with pride.

"Shippin' to Sioux City, you said?"

"Yep."

"Well, so long."

"So long. Shippin' any these days, Jim?"

"Nope. Boss never dribbles 'em. When he ships he ships. Ain't none gone over the rails since last fall."

He stepped off briskly and vaulted the fence with a lightsome air as though he were bent on the one errand his heart would choose, and swung up the track carelessly humming a tune. But he had a vise-like grip on his cob pipe. His teeth bit through the frill stem. It split. He tossed the remains away with a gesture of nervous contempt. A whistle sounded. He quickened his pace. If he missed her—well, the boss was a good fellow, took a lot of nonsense from the boys, but there were things he would not stand for. Jim did not need to be told that this would be one of them.

The platform was crowded. The yellow sunlight fell slantingly on the gay groups.

"Aw, Munson, you're bluffin'," jested the mail carrier. "You ain't lookin' fer nobody; you know you ain't. You ain't got no folks. Don't believe you never had none. Never heard of 'em."

"Why, it's the Three Bars that's bringin' you here. Didn't you know that? There's nary a man in the hull country with backbone enough to keep off all-fours 'ceptin' Paul Langford. Um. You just try once to walk over the boss, will you? Lord! What a grease spot you'd make!"

"Mr. Gordon isn't being walked over, is he?" asked Louise, finished with her tea and toast and impatient to be off.

"Oh, Gordon? Pretty decent sort o' chap. Right ideas. Don't know much about handlin' hoss thieves and sich. Ain't smooth enough. Acted kind o' like a chicken with its head cut off till the boss got into the round-up."

"Oh!" said Louise, whose conception of the young counsel for the state did not tally with this delineation.

"Yep, Miss, this here's the boss's doin's. Yep, Lord! What'll that gang look like when we are through with 'em. Spendin' the rest o' their days down there in Sioux Falls, mediatin' on the advisability o' walkin' clear o' the toes o' the Three Bars in the future and cussin' their stupendous stupidity in foolin' even once with the Three Bars. Yep, sir—yep, ma'am. I mean—Jesse Black and his gang have acted just like pesky, little plumb-foot mosquitoes, and we're goin' to slap 'em. The cheek o' 'em, lightin' on the Three Bars! Lord!"

"Mr. Williston informed, did he not?"

"Williston? Oh, yes, he informed, but he'd never 'a' done it if it hadn't 'a' been for the boss. The ol' jellyfish wouldn't 'a' had the nerve to inform without backin', as sure as a stone wall. The boss is a doin' this, I tell you, Miss. But Williston's a goin' on the stand to-morrow all right, and so am I."

### CHAPTER V. At the Bon Ami.

Unlike most of those who ride much her escort was a fast walker. Louise had trouble in keeping up with him, though she had always considered herself a good pedestrian. But Jim Munson was laboring under strange embarrassment. He was red-facedly conscious of the attention he was attracting striding up the inclined street from the station in the van of the prettiest and most thoroughbred girl who had struck Velpen this long time.

Not that he objected to attention under normal conditions. Not he! He courted it. His chief aim in life seemed to be to throw the limelight of publicity, first, on the Three Bars ranch as the one and only in the category of ranches, and to be connected with it in some way, however slight, the unquestioned aim and object of existence of every man, woman and child in the cattle country; secondly, on Paul Langford, the very boss of bosses, whose master mind was the prop and stay of the northwest, if not of all Christendom; and lastly, upon himself, the modest, but loyal servant in this Paradise on earth. But girls were far from normal conditions. There were no women at the Three Bars. There never had been any woman at the Three Bars within the memory of man. To be sure, Williston's little girl had sometimes ridden over on an errand, but she didn't count. This—this was the real thing, and he didn't know just how to deal with it. He needed time to enlarge his sight to this broadened horizon.

He glanced with nonchalance over his shoulder. After all, she was only a girl, and not such a big one, either. She wore longer skirts than Williston's girl, but he didn't believe she was a day older. He squared about immediately, and what he had meant to say he never said, on account of an unaccountable thickening of his tongue.

Presently he bolted into a building, which proved to be the Bon Ami, a restaurant under the direct supervision of the fat, voluble and tragic Mrs. Higgins, where the men from the other side of the river had right of way and unlimited credit.

"What'll you have?" he asked, hospitably, the familiar air of the Bon Ami bringing him back to his accustomed self-confident swagger.

"Might I have some tea and toast please?" said Louise, sinking into a

chair at the nearest table, with two startling yet amusing thoughts rampant in her brain. One was, that she wished Aunt Helen could have seen her swinging along in the wake of this typical "bold and licentious" man, and calmly and comfortably sitting down to a cozy little supper for two at a public eating house; the other startling thought was to the effect that the invitation was redolent with suggestiveness, and she wondered if she was not expected to say, "A whiskey for me, please."

"Guess you kin," answered Jim, wonder in his voice at the exceeding barrenness of the order. "Mrs. Higgins, hello there, Mrs. Higgins! I say, there, bring on some tea and toast for the lady!"

"Where is the Three Bars?" asked Louise, her thoughts straying to the terrors of a 15-mile drive through a strange and uncanny country with a stranger and yet more uncanny man. She had accepted him without question. He was part and parcel with the strangeness of her new position. But the suddenness of the transition from idle conjecture to startling reality had raised her proud head and she looked this new development squarely in the face without outward hint of inward perturbation.

"Say, where was you raised?" asked Jim, with tolerant scorn, between huge mouthfuls of boiled pork and cabbage, interspersed with baked potatoes, hot rolls and soggy dumplings, shoveled in with knife, fork or spoon. He occasionally anticipated dessert by making a sudden sortie into the quarter of an immense custard pie, hastening the end by means of noisy draughts of steaming coffee. Truly, the Three Bars connection had the fat of the land at the Bon Ami.

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The two cowboys at the corner table had long since finished their supper. They now lighted bad-smelling cigars and left the room. To Louise's great relief Munson rose, too. He was back very soon with a neat little runabout and a high-spirited team of bays.

"Boss's private," explained Jim with pride. "Nothin' too good for a lady, so the boss sent this and me to take keer o' it. And o' you, too, Miss," he added, as an afterthought.

He held the lines in his brown, muscular hands, lovingly, while he stowed away Louise's belongings and himself

snugly in the seat, and then the blood burned hot and stinging through his bronzed, tough skin, for suddenly in his big, honest, untrained sensibilities was born the consciousness that the boss would have stowed away the lady first. It was an embarrassing moment. Louise saved the day by climbing in unconcernedly after him and tucking the linen robe over her skirt.

"It will be a dusty drive, won't it?" she asked, simply.

"Miss, you're a—dandy," said Jim as simply.

As they dove upon the pontoon bridge, Louise looked back at the little

town on the bluffs and felt a momentary choking in her throat. It was a strange place, yet it had tendrils reaching homeward. The trail he beyond was obscurely marked and not easy to discern. She turned to her companion and asked quickly: "Why didn't Mary come?"

"Great guns!" Did I forget to tell you? Williston's got the stomach ache to beat the band and Mary's got to physic him up 'gin to-morrow. We've got to git him on that stand if it takes the hull Three Bars to hol' him up and the gal a pourin' physic down him 'tween times. Yep, Ma'am. He was pizened. You see, everybody that ate any meat last night was took sick with gripin' cramps, yep; but Williston he was worse'n all, he bein' a hearty eater. He was a stayin' in town over night on this preliminary business, and Dick Gordon he was took, too, but not so bad, bein' what you might call a light eater. The boss and me we drove home after all, though we'd expected to stay for supper. The pesky coyotes got fooled that time. Yep, ma'am, no doubt about it in the world. Friends o' Jesse's that we ain't able to lay hands on yit pizenated that there meat. Yep, no doubt about it. Dick was in an awful sweat about you. Was bound he was a comin' after you hisself, sick as he was, when we found Mary was o' the count. So then the boss was a comin' and they fit and squabbled for an hour who could be best spared, when I comin' in, settled it in a jiffy by offerin' my services, which was gladly accepted. When there's pizenin' goin' on, why, the boss's place is hum. And nothin' would do but the boss's own particular outfit. He never does things by halves, the boss don't. So I licks home after it and then hikes here."

"I am very grateful to him, I am sure," murmured Louise, smiling.

And Jim, daring to look upon her smiling face, clear eyes and soft hair under the jaunty French sailor hat, found himself wondering why there was no woman at the Three Bars. With the swift, half-intuitive thought, the serpent entered Eden.

### CHAPTER VI. "Nothing but a Hoss Thief, Anyway."

The island teemed with early sunflowers and hints of goldenrod yet to come. The fine, white, sandy soil deadened the sound of the horses' hoofs. They seemed to be spinning through space. Under the cottonwoods it grew dusky and still.

At the toll house a dingy backboard in a state of weird dilapidation, with a team of shaggy buckskin ponies, stood waiting. Jim drew up. Two men were lounging in front of the shanty, chatting to the toll-man.

"Hello, Jim!" called one of them, a tall, slouching fellow with sandy coloring.

"Now, how the devil did you git so familiar with my name?" growled Jim.

"The Three Bars is gettin' busy these days," spoke up the second man, with an insolent grin.

"You bet it is," bragged Jim. "When the officers of the law are out with hoss thieves and such, they take two weeks to arrest a man, and when they know precisely where they keep themselves, and have to have special deputies appointed over 'em five or six times and then let most o' the bunch slip through their fingers, it's time for some one to git busy. And when Jesse Black and his gang are so despit' they pizen the chief witnesses—"

A gentle pressure on his arm stopped him. He turned inquiringly.

"I wouldn't say any more," whispered Louise. "Let's get on."

The hint was sufficient, and with the words, "Right you are, Miss Reporter, we'll be gittin' on," Jim paid his toll and spoke to his team.

"Just wait a bit, will you?" spoke up the sandy man.

"What for?"

"We're not just ready."

"Well, we are," shortly.

"We arn't, and we don't care to be passed, you know."

He spoke indifferently. In deference to Louise, Jim waited. The men smoked on carelessly. The toll-man fidgeted.

"You go to hell! The Three Bars ain't waitin' on no damned hoss thieves," said Jim, suddenly.

His nervous team sprang forward. Quick as a flash the sandy man was in the backboard. He struck the bays a stinging blow with his rawhide, and as they swerved aside he swung into the straight course to the narrow bridge of boats. In another moment the way would be blocked. With a burning oath Jim, keeping to the side of the steep incline till the river mire cut him off, deliberately turned his stanch little team squarely and crowded them forward against the shaggy buckskins. It was team against team. Louise, clinging tightly to the seat, lips pressed together to keep back any sound, felt a wild, inexplicable thrill of confidence in the strength of the man beside her.

The bays were pitifully, cruelly lashed by the enraged owner of the buckskins, but true as steel to the familiar voice that had guided them so often and so kindly, they gave not nor faltered. There was a snapping of broken wood, a wrench, a giving way, and the runabout sprang over debris of broken wheel and wagon-box to the narrow confines of the pontoon bridge.

"The Three Bars is gettin' busy!" glibed Jim over his shoulder.

"It's a sorry day for you and yours," cried the other, in black and ugly wrath.

"We ain't afraid. You're nothin' but a hoss thief, anyway!" responded Jim, gleefully, as a parting shot.

"Now what do you suppose was their game?" he asked of the girl at his side.

## Nehawka

(From the Register.)

John G. Wunderlich was a visitor to the old-town-on-the-river last Saturday, going from there to Missouri on a business trip.

F. A. Hansen sold a team to the horsebuyers that were here the first of the week for \$400. Are horses coming down? Well we guess nit—not good ones at any rate.

Samuel Humphrey and Mrs. Carl Stone left on Wednesday for Cherokee, Oklahoma, on a visit to friends down there. This will be Sam's vacation that came as a prize for the best section.

Thomas Kivett who works for Ernest Young received a visit from his brother and a friend named Emmett O'Brien on Tuesday. Both the young men hail from Liberty, North Carolina.

J. M. Stone returned Wednesday morning from Oskaloosa, Iowa, where he has been to see Mrs. West. He reports Gladys as doing nicely, but Mrs. West's condition is not as favorable as was hoped for.

J. Wesley Pittman from near Union was in town Tuesday and made this office a pleasant call. Mr. Pittman is an old settler and in the course of our conversation we learned many things incident to the early days in Nebraska.

Adjutant-General Schwartz of the Nebraska National Guard was in Nehawka on Wednesday. He had been at Weeping Water in the evening inspecting the company there and then came down for a short visit with Vilas P. Sheldon. He reports much enthusiasm in the Weeping Water company, but in many places companies have been mustered out for the lack of enthusiasm.

Noticing a stream of blood in front of Dr. Walker's office, we stepped in and asked where the victim was and he referred us to Tommy Fulton. While he and George Hansen were loading a

disc that he had just finished shapening, the disc turned in the wagon and caught Tom's left wrist between it and the wagon box, severing a vein, splitting a tendon and scraping the bone. Other than having to lay off from work for a couple of weeks he will come out all OK.

Vilas Pettigrew Sheldon, who has been a wanderer on the face of the earth and California, returned home Friday evening. He said that Nehawka was the best looking town he had seen in all his travels. He said that he did not like the atmosphere of that country—especially the current of "hot air" that was continually moving—this article being furnished by the native. He reports Mrs. Sheldon as being in about the same health that she was when they left.

## Union

From the Ledger.

G. S. Upton is the proud owner of four fine Goloway cows which he purchased from Vincent Straub last week.

Mrs. Woolson and Mrs. Berry arrived from Missouri last Saturday and have been visiting the Frans and Downs families southwest of this village.

Mrs. Irena F. Davis and Mrs. H. R. Conrad arrived home last Saturday evening from Dallas, Texas, where they went three weeks ago to visit Mrs. Davis' daughter, Mrs. Edward Ruhmann.

L. R. Upton was in Omaha last Friday to have a specialist treat his left eye, which had been causing him much trouble. He has only two eyes, and thinks he don't want to lose the use of half of them.

Wes Burnett, Lewis Fitch, Mark White, Joe Campbell and Louie Korrell, residents of the Kenosha neighborhood, hauled a fine lot of fat porkers to this market Tuesday and all of those gentlemen called to see us and "swap yarns."

Geo. H. True returned yesterday from Omaha, where he has been assisting in taking care of his son Ezra, upon whom an operation for appendicitis was performed last week. Mr. True reports that the boy is getting along very nicely.

Wm. Wegand and his mother, accompanied by their housekeeper, Mrs. Rosa Payne, a colored lady, arrived here Tuesday morning from Hiawatha, bringing a car load of household goods and will make this their permanent home, occupying the Lloyd residence in the north part of the village.

L. R. Black, who has been Missouri Pacific agent here for some time, was "checked out" Wednesday and will go to Malvern, Iowa, to visit his mother and enjoy a few weeks vacation before taking up another station. Mr. Black has been a very accommodating and efficient agent and has many friends here who regret that he will locate elsewhere.

### Found a Petrified Tree

While making the excavation for the drainage ditch on the Coates-Falter farm north of the city, the workman discovered a tree standing erect, and it had stood in the native forest, entirely petrified, and turned to stone. It had been buried by the changing of the current of the creek and the continual washings, had buried the tree. Mr. Coates says the tree must have been buried for a great number of years.

## RETURN TO FORMER METHODS

The Burlington Resume the Book-keeping in Vogue Some Time Since Being the Better Than

Later System Used

With the beginning of the first of the coming month, the Burlington will resume the use of the old style method of station accounts, for the past year there has been in vogue a system of what is known as monthly abstracts accounts system, and which necessitated an enormous amount of work for the agent, and for the cashier at stations where they were maintained, as at this point. The monthly abstract system had to show the business with each station on the road, which did business with this station in divisions, as well as the amount done with points on foreign roads. This required some three days work of the station agent or cashier at the end of the month, and was a big task in addition to the other duties required of the agent or cashier.

With the resumption of the former method which is known as the daily report system, an abstract of the bill received and sent out will be made daily, which goes to the general offices, and this is a settlement complete every day, without the monthly abstract and allows the books to be kept in the local offices closed and balanced with each days business transacted. The return to the former method is hailed with delight with the agents and cashiers upon whom the work falls. From the experience the management found that the "Something better" was not as good as what they had had before.

### Lets Us Have Action

Cass county has as good newspapers as any county in the state. Still, improvements may yet be made. How to make additional improvements is the question. The Courier suggests that the Cass county publishers get together and organize a county newspaper club and hold monthly meetings, first in one town and then in another. By making these rounds of the county the publishers will get better acquainted with the people of the county, and know more of the county in which they reside. Exchange of thoughts is always of value to newspaper men, as well as to men of other callings. This is a day of evolution. None of us can stand still. We either go forward or backward. Let us go forward. Let us get together. Brothers of newspaperdom, what do you say to the project?—Louisville Couriers.

The Journal sanctions every word contained in the above. They are right to the point. The writer's experience, which perhaps is double that in years of any other editor in the county, has taught him that were it not for the annual gathering of newspaper people, the elevation of the profession would not be where it is today. An exchange of views occasionally on matters pertaining business in our line will help us all. Besides, the social features attendant will make us more congenial with one another and give us an opportunity of an outing at least one day in a month. Therefore count us in, Bro. Mayfield.

Returned From South Dakota.

Robert Troop returned last Saturday evening from Gregory, South Dakota, where he has been for the past ten days, going to complete the arrangement of selling his farm at that place, which he did, the place bringing \$7,100. Mr. Troop says the town is full of people and great difficulty is experienced in obtaining any accommodations as to lodging, but the matter of meals is not so much of a problem. At present there are six buildings under construction and much snow still on the ground.

When the Kettle Sings

It's a sign of coal satisfaction. Want to hear the music in your kitchen? Easy—order coal from this office and yard. The output of the Trenton mine—the fuel we handle—has no superior anywhere, its equal in few places.

J. V. EGENBERGER,  
Plattsmouth No. 22.  
Bell No. 351.  
PLATTSMOUTH, NEBRASKA.



I've Got a Bill-of-Sale for Him.



Lookin' for my uncle," explained Jim, serenely. "Rich old codger from the state o' Pennsylvania some'ers. Ain't got nobody but me left."

"Aw, come off! What you givin' us?"

But Jim only winked and slouched off, prime for more adventures. He was enjoying himself hugely—when he was not thinking of petticoats.

### CHAPTER V. At the Bon Ami.

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As they dove upon the pontoon bridge, Louise looked back at the little

town on the bluffs and felt a momentary choking in her throat. It was a strange place, yet it had tendrils reaching homeward. The trail he beyond was obscurely marked and not easy to discern. She turned to her companion and asked quickly: "Why didn't Mary come?"

"Great guns!" Did I forget to tell you? Williston's got the stomach ache to beat the band and Mary's got to physic him up 'gin to-morrow. We've got to git him on that stand if it takes the hull Three Bars to hol' him up and the gal a pourin' physic down him 'tween times. Yep, Ma'am. He was pizened. You see, everybody that ate any meat last night was took sick with gripin' cramps, yep; but Williston he was worse'n all, he bein' a hearty eater. He was a stayin' in town over night on this preliminary business, and Dick Gordon he was took, too, but not so bad, bein' what you might call a light eater. The boss and me we drove home after all, though we'd expected to stay for supper. The pesky coyotes got fooled that time. Yep, ma'am, no doubt about it in the world. Friends o' Jesse's that we ain't able to lay hands on yit pizenated that there meat. Yep, no doubt about it. Dick was in an awful sweat about you. Was bound he was a comin' after you hisself, sick as he was, when we found Mary was o' the count. So then the boss was a comin' and they fit and squabbled for an hour who could be best spared, when I comin' in, settled it in a jiffy by offerin' my services, which was gladly accepted. When there's pizenin' goin' on, why, the boss's place is hum. And