

The Branding Iron

By Katharine Newlin Burt

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FOREWORD

Next to the impulses to satisfy hunger and thirst, and to rest when tired, the most elemental is to possess something; to acquire property. With possession comes the thought of protecting and so marking the property as to distinguish it from that belonging to others. The branding iron is only an improvement upon crude methods of marking in vogue since the beginning of the human race. This is a romance of the cattle country. Primarily, it is a love story in which the passions of virtue, strong-willed, danger-defying people are realistically and powerfully revealed. Katharine Newlin Burt, the authoress, has had much experience of the West and finds great inspiration for her work in the life and characters of that region. There are few writers who equal her in ability to make readers feel the emotions of her characters and the effects of life spent in close conjunction with wild nature.

Book One: The Two-Bar Brand

CHAPTER I

Joan Reads by Firelight.

There is no silence so fearful, so breathless, so searching as the night silence of a wild country buried five feet deep in snow. For thirty miles or so, north, south, east and west of the small, half-smothered speck of gold in Pierre Landis' cabin window, there lay, on a certain December night, this silence, bathed in moonlight. The cold was intense; below the bench where Pierre's homestead lay there rose from the twisted, rapid river a cloud of steam above which the hoar-frosted tops of cottonwood trees were perfectly distinct, trunk, branch and twig, against a sky the color of iris petals. The stars flared brilliantly, hardly dimmed by the full moon, and over the vast surface of the snow minute crystals kept up a steady shining of their own. The range of sharp, wind-scraped mountains, uplifted fourteen thousand feet, rode across the country, northeast, southwest, dazzling in white armor, spears up to the sky, a sight, seen suddenly, to take the breath, like the crashing march of archangels militant.

In the center of this ring of silent crystal Pierre Landis' logs shut in a little square of warm and ruddy human darkness. Joan, his wife, made the heart of this defiant space—Joan, the one mind living in this ghostly area of night. She had put out the lamp, for Pierre, starting toward two days before, had warned her with a certain threatening sharpness not to waste oil, and she lay on the hearth, her rough head almost in the ashes, reading a book by the unsteady light of the flames. She followed the printed lines with a strong, dark forefinger and her lips framed the words with slow, whispering motions. It was a long, strong woman's body stretched there across the floor, heavily if not sluggishly built, dressed rudely in warm stuffs and clumsy boots, and it was a heavy face, too, unlit from within, but built on lines of perfect animal beauty. The head and throat had the massive look of a marble fragment stained to one even tone and dug up from Attic earth. And she was reading thus heavily and slowly, by firelight in the midst of this tremendous northern night, Keats' version of Boccaccio's "Fate of Isabella and the Pot of Basil."

The story for some reason interested her. She felt that she could understand the love of young Lorenzo and of Isabella, the hatred of those two brothers and Isabella's horrible tenderness for that young murdered head. There were even things in her own life that she compared with these; in fact, at every phrase she stopped, and, staring ahead, crudely and ignorantly visualized, after her own experience, what she had just read; and, in doing so, she pictured her own life.

Her love and Pierre's—her life before Pierre came—to put herself in Isabella's place, she felt back to the days before her love, when she had lived in a desolation of bleak poverty, up and away along Lone river in her father's shack. This log house of Pierre's was a castle by contrast. John Carver and his daughter had shared one room between them; Joan's bed curtained off with gunny-sacking in a corner. She slept on hides and rolled herself up in old dingy patchwork quilts and worn blankets. On winter mornings she would wake covered with the snow that had sifted in between the ill-matched logs. There had been a stove, one leg gone and substituted for by a huge cobblestone; there had been two chairs, a long box, a table, shelves—all rudely made by John; there had been guns and traps and snowshoes, hides, skins, the wings of birds, a couple of fishing-ropes—John made his living by legal and illegal trapping and killing. He had looked like a trapped or hunted creature himself, small, furtive, very dark, with long fingers always working over his mouth, a great crooked

nose—a hideous man, surely a hideous father. He hardly ever spoke, but sometimes, coming home from the town which he visited several times a year, but to which he had never taken Joan, he would sit down over the stove and go over heavily, for Joan's benefit, the story of his crime and his escape. Joan always told herself that she would not listen, whatever he said she would stop her ears, but always the story fascinated her, held her, eyes widened on the figure by the stove. He had sat huddled in his chair, gnarled, his face contorting with the emotions of the story, his own brilliant eyes fixed on the round red mouth of the stove. The reflection of this scarlet circle was hideously noticeable in his pupils.

"A man's a right to kill his woman if she ain't honest with him," so the story began; "if he finds out she's ben trickin' of him, playin' him off for another man. That was yer mother, gel; she was a bad woman." There followed a coarse and vivid description of her badness and the manner of it. "That kinder thing no man can let pass by in his wife. I found her"—again the rude details of his discovery—"an' I found him, an' I let him go for the white-livered coward he was, but her I killed. I shot her dead after she'd said her prayers an' asked God's mercy on her soul. Then I walked off, but they kotched me an' I was tried. They didn't swing me. Out in them parts they knowed I was in my rights; so the boys held, but 'twas a life sentence. They tuk me by rail down to Dawson an' I give 'em the slip, handcuffs an' all. Perhaps 'twas only a half-hearted chase they made fer me. Some of them fellers mebbe had wives of their own." He always stopped to laugh at this point. "An' I cut off up country till



She Followed the Printed Lines With a Strong, Dark Finger.

I come to a snuffly at the edge of a town. I hung round for a spell till the smith had gone off an' I got into his place an' rid me of the handcuffs. 'Twas a job, but I wasn't kotched at it an' I made myself free." Followed the story of his wanderings and his hardships and his coming to Lone river and setting out his traps. "In them days there weren't no law agin' trappin' beaver. A man could make a honest livin'. Now they've tuk an' made laws agin' a man's bread an' butter. I ask ye, if 'tain't wrong on a Tuesday to trap yer beaver, why, 'tain't wrong the follerin' Tuesday. I don't see it, jes becoss some fellers back there has made a law agin' it to suit themselves. Anyway, the market for beaver hides is still prime. Mebbe I'll leave you a fortin, gel. I've saved you from badness, anyhow. I risked a lot to go back an' git you, but I done it. You was playin' out in front of yer aunt's house an' I come for you. You was a three-year-old an' a big youngster. Says I, 'What's yer name?' Says you, 'Joan Carver'; an' I knowed you by yer likeness to her. By G—d! I swore I'd save ye. I tuk you off with me, though you put up a fight an' I hed to use you rough to silence you. 'There ain't a-goin' to be no man in yer life, Joan Carver,' says I; 'you an' yer big eyes is a-goin' to be fer me, to do my work an' to look after my comforts. No pretty boys fer you an' no husbands either to go a-shootin' of you down fer yer sins.' He shivered and shook his head. "No, here you stays with yer father an' grows up a good gel. There ain't a-goin' to be no man in yer life, Joan."

But youth was stronger than the man's half-crazy will, and when she was seventeen Joan ran away.

She found her way easily enough to the town, for she was wise in the tracks of the wild country, and John's trail townwards, though so rarely used, was to her eyes plain enough;

and very coolly she walked into the hotel, past the group of loungers around the stove, and asked at the desk, where Mrs. Upper sat, if she could get a job. Mrs. Upper and the loungers stared, for there were few women in this frontier country and those few were well known. This great, strong girl, heavily graceful in her heavily awkward clothes, bare-headed, shod like a man, her face and throat purely classic, her eyes gray and wide and as secret in expression as an untamed beast's—no one had ever seen the like of her before.

"What's yer name?" asked Mrs. Upper suspiciously. It was Mormon day in the town; there were celebrations and her house was full; she needed extra hands, but where this wild creature was concerned she was doubtful.

"Joan. I'm John Carver's daughter," answered the girl. At once comprehension dawned; heads were nodded, then craned for a better look. Yes, the town, the whole country even, had heard of John Carver's imprisoned daughter. Sober and drunk, he had boasted of her and of how there was to be "no man" in her life. It was like dangling ripe fruit above the mouths of hungry boys to make such a boast in such a land. "Your father sent you down here for a job?" asked Mrs. Upper incredulously.

"No, I come." Joan's grave gaze was unchanging. "I'm tired of it up there. I ain't a-goin' back. I'm most eighteen now an' I kinder want a change." She had not meant to be funny, but a gust of laughter rattled the room. She shrank back. It was more terrifying to her than any cruelty she had fancied meeting her in the town. These were the men her father had forbidden, these loud-laughing, crinkled faces. She had turned to brave them, a great surge of color in her brows.

"Don't mind the boys, dear," spoke Mrs. Upper. "They will laff, joke or none. We ain't none of us blamin' you. It's a wonder you ain't run off long afore now. I can give you a job an' welcome, but you'll be green an' unhandy. Well, sir, we kin learn ye. You kin turn yer hand to chamber-work an' mebbe help at the table. Maud will show you. But, Joan, what will dad do to you? He'll be takin' after you hot-foot, I reckon, an' he fer gettin' you back home as soon as he can."

Joan did not change her look. "I'll not be goin' back with him," she said.

Her slow, deep voice, chest notes of a musical vibration, stirred the room. The men were hers and gruffly said so. A sudden warmth enveloped her from heart to foot. She followed Mrs. Upper to the initiation in her service, clothed for the first time in human sympathies.

CHAPTER II

Pierre Lays His Hand on a Heart.

Maud Upper was the first girl of her own age that Joan had ever seen. Joan went in terror of her and Maud knew this and enjoyed her ascendancy over an untamed creature twice her size. There was the crack of a lion-tamer's whip in the tone of her instructions. That was after a day or two. At first Maud had been horribly afraid of Joan. "A wild thing like her, livin' off there in the hills with that man; why, ma, there's no tellin' what she might be doin' to me."

"She won't hurt ye," laughed Mrs. Upper, who had lived in the wilds herself, having been a frontiersman's wife before the days even of this frontier town and having married the hotel-keeper as a second venture. She knew that civilization—this rude place being civilization to Joan—would cow the girl, and she knew that Maud's self-assertive buoyancy would frighten the soul of her. Maud was large-hipped, high-bosomed, with a small, round waist much compressed. She taught Joan impatiently and laughed loudly but not unkindly at her ways. "Gee, she's awkward, ain't she?" she would say to the men; "trail like a bull moose!"

The men grinned, but their eyes followed Joan's movements. As a matter of fact, she was not awkward. Through her clumsy clothes, the heaviness of her early youth, in spite of all the fetters of her ignorance, her wonderful long bones and her wonderful strength asserted themselves. She never hurried. At first this apparent sluggishness infuriated Maud. "Get a gait on ye, Joan Carver!" she would scream above the din of the rough meals, but soon she found that Joan's slow movements accomplished a tremendous amount of work in an amazingly short time. There was no pause in the girl's activity. She poured out her strength as a python pours his, noiselessly, evenly, steadily, no haste, no waste. And the men's eyes brooded upon her.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Unfair Attack.

Cabby to chauffeur, whose car has bumped into his horse!—Ah, yer blanket blank coward! Forty against one!—Boston Evening Transcript.

NEW CLOTHES FOR SCHOOL;

GOWNS IN SUAVE LINES

FOR the little daughter, who must have new clothes for September wear, there are many new and attractive styles in frocks made of tub materials that will delight her youthful heart. And furthermore, because of their simplicity, they do not present any difficulty in making. Tub frocks for juvenile wear are being shown in linen and gingham in all sorts of cheery colors and nearly all of them have for decoration simple designs in hand embroidery to relieve the severe lines of the mode.

Devonshire gingham is used in the little dress pictured here. The collar and cuffs are of white linen embroidered with bright-colored cotton yarns.

ers are favoring drapery that is sure to become an important part of early fall fashions.

Generally speaking, the draped gown is at once clever and extremely simple. Where drapery is used, the waist or blouse portion follows the easy lines of the present mode and draping is confined to the sleeves and to one side of the skirt. Embroidery is the most popular means of trimming and there is a noticeable absence of ruffles, plaits, panels or other elaborations.

The attractive dinner gown shown here is of black satin ornamented with machine embroidery, the design done in French knots. The embroidery is in



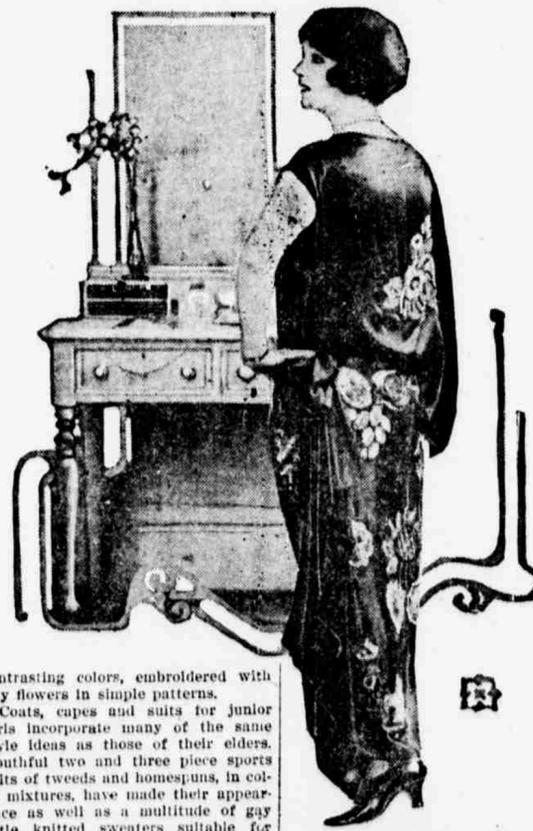
Devonshire Gingham Dress

The waistline is defined with two rows of cording and the collar ties with a little ribbon bow.

Dotted swiss voile and batiste continue as the most popular materials for party wear. Little frocks of these materials are elaborated with pin-tucks, smocking, hand-drawnwork and embroidery and are developed in shades of mauve, light blue, pink, rose, French blue and tangerine. Linens, in plain colors generally, have collars and sleeve facings of the same material in

subdued colors that do not form too harsh a contrast with the satin. The draped skirt of this model is caught in a puff over the left hip and falls in soft folds to the ankle. It is balanced on the right side by the long fold of a false sleeve draped at the shoulder. The waistline is low and is caught by a narrow belt of satin.

For the slender woman a garment of this kind provides an attractive variation of the mode, but if one is short or plump the severely straight



Attractive Dinner Gown

contrasting colors, embroidered with tiny flowers in simple patterns.

Coats, capes and suits for junior girls incorporate many of the same style ideas as those of their elders. Youthful two and three piece sports suits of tweeds and homespuns, in color mixtures, have made their appearance as well as a multitude of gay little knitted sweaters suitable for wear with the knicker and blouse, or skirt and blouse combinations that are at present in favor.

While there is a uniform opinion in style circles that the straight-line silhouette will be the most popular in coats and suits for fall there is a considerable latitude of opinion as to whether gowns will conform to straight lines or not. So many design-

Julia Bottomley
(1223, West) Newspaper Union.

MRS. BUTLER'S AGES AND PAINS

Vanished After Using Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound

W. Philadelphia, Pa.—"When I closed my house last April I must have over-lifted, for after that I had pains and aches all the time and was so discouraged, I could hardly do my own housework, and I could not carry a basket of groceries from the store nor walk even four or five squares without getting terrible pains in my back and abdomen and lower limbs."



I went to visit a friend in Mt. Holly, N. J., and she said, 'Mrs. Butler, why don't you take Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound?' My husband said that if it did her so much good for the same trouble, I should try it. So I have taken it and it is doing me good. Whenever I feel heavy or bad, it puts me right on my feet again. I am able to do my work with pleasure and am getting strong and stout. I still take the Vegetable Compound and Liver Pills, and am using Lydia E. Pinkham's Sanative Wash."—Mrs. CHARLES BUTLER, 1233 S. Hanson St., W. Phila., Pa.
Write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co., Lynn, Mass., for a free copy of Lydia E. Pinkham's Private Text Book upon "Ailments of Women."

Pitied the Poor Prisoner.

Dean Inge of St. Paul's cathedral, London, Eng., speaking at a demonstration on behalf of animal welfare referred to his daughter's death, and said her favorite hobby was after ward placed with close friends, who gave it open-air experience. It was a most remarkable fact that the London sparrow, for whom very few people had a kind word, took pity on the imprisoned bird and dropped bits of straw and other materials into the cage for it to make a nest.

BABIES CRY FOR "CASTORIA"

Prepared Especially for Infants and Children of All Ages

Mother! Fletcher's Castoria has been in use for over 30 years as a pleasant, harmless substitute for Castor Oil, Paregoric, Teething Drops and Soothing Syrups. Contains no narcotics. Proven directions are on each package. Physicians recommend it. The genuine bears signature of

Chas. H. Fletcher.

Electricity in North Lands.

Scandinavia, as a group of three different countries, has for many years been working on the problem of transferring electrical energy from Norway and Sweden to Denmark. An important report is now ready and three national commissions have it in hand. The next report will go to the three governments. It is understood that projected plans can easily be carried out both technically and commercially but at the same time there will be needed an immense sum of money.

Cuticura Soap for the Complexion.

Nothing better than Cuticura Soap daily and Ointment now and then as needed to make the complexion clear, scald clean and hands soft and white. Add to this the fascinating, fragrant Cuticura Talcum, and you have the Cuticura Toilet Trio.—Advertisement.

Getting Her Share.

The sage maintained that it was all foolishness—these jokes about a wife dipping into her husband's pockets. "What she really does," he explained, "is to press his trousers and hang them upside down. Then the money drops out."
"And then what?"
"He's a poor stick if he doesn't divvy."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Cone's doctrine was put in practice long ago, when sick people were told they "looked better."

Have You a Bad Back?

You can't be happy when every day brings morning lameness, torturing backache and sharp, cutting pains. So, why not find the cause and correct it? Likely it's your kidneys. If you suffer headaches and dizziness, too—feel tired, nervous and depressed, it's further proof your kidneys need help. Neglect is dangerous! Begin using Doan's Kidney Pills today. Thousands have been helped by Doan's. They should help you. Ask your neighbor!

A Nebraska Case

Mrs. A. H. Foster, Clay Center, Neb., says: "My kidneys were in a weak condition. I was sore and lame. I had a dull aching across my back and kidneys. I had heard about Doan's Kidney Pills being so good, and they sure helped me. Three or four boxes gave me a permanent relief so I have not been bothered since."

Get Doan's at Any Store, 60c a Box
DOAN'S KIDNEY PILLS
FOSTER-MILBURN CO., BUFFALO, N. Y.