

# THE BRANDING IRON

By Katharine Newlin Burt

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## SYNOPSIS

Joan Landis, eighteen years old, wife of Pierre, is the daughter of John Carver, who murdered her mother for adultery. Her lonely life, with her father, in a Wyoming cabin, unbearable, Joan leaves him to work in a hotel in a nearby town. Joan meets Pierre, and the two, mutually attracted, are married. Carver tells Pierre story of Joan's mother. Pierre forges a cattle brand. Frank Holliswell, young minister, presents books to Joan. Pierre forbids her to read them.

## CHAPTER V—Continued.

"There's poetry this time," he said. "Get Pierre to read it aloud to you." The suggestion was met by a rude laugh from Pierre.

"I wouldn't be wastin' my time," he jeered.

It was the first rift in his courtesy. Holliswell looked up in sharp surprise. He saw a flash of the truth, a little wriggle of the green serpent in Pierre's eyes before they fell. He flushed and glanced at Joan. She wore an almost timorous air, accepted his remarks in silence, shot doubtful looks at Pierre before she answered questions, was an entirely different Joan. Now Holliswell was angry and he stiffened toward his host and hostess, dropped all his talk about the books and smoked haughtily. He was young and over-sensitive, no more master of himself in this instance than Pierre and Joan. But before he left after supper, refusing a bed, though Pierre conquered his dislike sufficiently to urge it, Holliswell had a moment with Joan. It was very touching. He would tell about it afterward, but for a long time he could not bear to remember it.

She tried to return his books, coming with her arms full of them and lifting up eyes that were almost tragic with renunciation.

"I can't be taking time to read them, Mr. Holliswell," she said, that extraordinary, over-expressive voice of hers running an octave of regret; "an' somehow Pierre don't like that I should spend my evenin's on them. Seems like he thinks I was settin' myself up to be knowin' more than him." She laughed ruefully. "Me—knowin' more'n Pierre! It's laughable. But anyways I don't want him to be thinkin' that. So take the books, please. I like them." She paused. "I love them," she said hungrily, and blinking, thrust them into his hands.

He put them down on the table. "You're wrong, Joan," he said quickly. "You mustn't give in to such a foolish idea. You have rights of your own, a life of your own. Pierre mustn't stand in the way of your learning. You mustn't let him. I'll speak to him." "Oh, no!" Some intuition warned her of the danger in his doing this.

"Well, then, keep your books and talk to Pierre about them. Try to persuade him to read aloud to you. I shan't be back now till spring, but I want you to read this winter, read all the stuff that's there. Come, Joan, to please me," and he smiled coaxingly.

"I ain't afraid of Pierre," said Joan slowly. Her pride was stung by the suggestion. "I'll keep the books." She sighed. "Good-by. When I see you in the spring, I'll be a right learned schoolmarm."

She held out her hand and he took and held it, pressing it in his own. He felt troubled about her, unwilling to leave her in the snowbound wilderness with that young savage of the smoldering eyes.

"Good-by," said Pierre behind him. His soft voice had a click.

Holliswell turned to him. "Good-by, Landis. I shan't see either of you till the spring. I wish you a good winter and I hope—" He broke off and held out his hand. "Well," said he, "you're pretty far out of everybody's way here. Be good to each other."

"D—n your interference!" said Pierre's eyes, but he took the hand and even escorted Holliswell to his horse.

Snow came early and deep that winter. Pierre had cut and stacked his winter wood; he had sent his cows to a richer man's ranch for winter feeding. There was very little for him to do. After he had brought in two buckets of water from the well and had cut for the day's consumption a piece of meat from his elk hanging outside against the wall, he had only to sit and smoke, to read old magazines and papers and to watch Joan. Then the poisonous roots of his jealousy struck deep. Always his brain, falsely interpreting her wistful silence—she was thinking of the parson, hungry to read his books, longing for the open season and his coming again to the ranch.

In December a man came in on snowshoes bringing "the mail"—one letter for Pierre, a communication which brought heat to his face. The Forest service threatened him with a loss of land; it pointed to some flaw in his title; part of his property, the most valuable part, had not yet been surveyed. . . . Pierre looked up with set jaws, every fighting instinct sharpened to hold what was his own.

"I hev put in two years' hard work on them acres," he told his visitor. "an' I'm not plannin' to give them over to the first fool favored by the Service. My title is as clean as my hand. It'll take more'n thievery an' more'n spite to take it away from me."

"You better go to Robinson," advised the bearer of the letter; "can't

get after them fellers too soon. It's a country where you can easy come by what you want, but where it ain't so easy to hold onto it. If it ain't yer land it's yer hosses; if it ain't yer hosses it's yer wife." He looked at Joan and laughed.

Pierre went white and dumb; the chance shot had inflamed his wound.

He strapped on his snowshoes and bade a grim good-by to Joan, after the man had left. "Don't you be wastin' oil while I'm away," he told her sharply, standing in the doorway, his head level with the steep wall of snow behind him, and he gave her a threatening look so that the tenderness in her heart was frozen.

After he had gone, "Pierre, say a real good-by, say good-by," she whispered. Her face cramped and tears came.

She heard his steps lightly crunching across the hard, bright surface of the snow; they entered into the terrible frozen silence. Then she turned from the door, dried her eyes with her sleeve like a little village girl, and ran across the room to a certain shelf. Pierre would be gone a week. She would not waste oil, but she would read. It was with the appetite of a starved creature that she fell upon her books.

## CHAPTER VI

Pierre Takes Steps to Preserve His Property.

A log fell forward and Joan lifted her head. She had not come to an end of Isabella's tragedy nor of her own memories, but something other than the falling log had startled her; a light, crunching step upon the snow.

She looked toward the window. For an instant the room was almost dark and the white night peered in at her, its gigantic snow-peaks pressing against the long, horizontal window panes, and in that instant she saw a face. Joan came to her feet with pounding pulses. It had been Pierre's face, but at the same time the face of a stranger. He had come back five days too soon and something terrible had happened. Surely his changing to see her with her book would not make him look like that. Besides, she was not wasting oil. She had stood up, but at first she was incapable of moving forward. For the first time in her life she knew the paralysis of unreasoning fear. Then the door opened and Pierre came in out of the crystal night.

"What brought you back so soon?" asked Joan.

"Too soon for you, eh?" He strode over to the hearth where she had lain, took up the book, struck it with his



She Turned Her Head, All That She Could Turn.

hand as though it had been a hated face, and flung it into the fire. "I seen you through the window," he said. "So you been happy readin' while I been away?"

"I'll get you supper. I'll light the lamp," Joan stammered.

Pierre's face was pale, his black hair lay in wet streaks on his temples. He must have traveled at furious speed through the bitter cold to be in such a sweat. There was a mysterious, controlled disorder in his look and there arose from him the odor of strong drink. But he was steady and sure in all his movements and his eyes were deadly cool and reasonable—only it was the reasonableness of insanity, reasonableness based on the wildest premises of unreason.

"I don't want no supper, nor no light," he said. "Firelight's enough fer you to read parson's books by; it's enough fer me to do what I oughter done long afore tonight."

She stood in the middle of the small, log-walled room, arrested in the act of lighting a match, and stared at him with troubled eyes. She was no longer afraid. After all, strange as he looked, more strangely as he talked, he was her Pierre, her man. The confidence of her heart had not been seriously shaken by his coldness and his moods during this winter. There had been times of fierce, possessive tenderness. She was his own woman, his property; at this low counting did she rate herself. A sane man does no injury to his own possessions. And Pierre, of course, was sane. He was

tired, angry, he had been drinking—her ignorance, her inexperience led her to put little emphasis on the effects of the poison sold at the town saloon. When he was warm and fed and rested he would be quite himself again. She went about preparing a meal in spite of his words.

He did not seem to notice this. He had taken his eyes from her at last and was busy with the fire. She, too, busy and reassured by the familiar occupation, ceased to watch him. Her pulses were quiet now. She was even beginning to be glad of his return. Why had she been so frightened? Of course, after such a terrible journey alone in the bitter cold, he would look strange. Her father, when he came back smelling of liquor, had always been more than usually morose and unlike his every-day self. He would sit over the stove and tell her the story of his crime. They were horrible home-comings, horrible evenings, but the next morning they would seem like dreams. Tomorrow this strangeness of Pierre's would be mistlike and unreal.

"I seen your sin-buster in town," said Pierre. He was squatting on his heels over the fire which he had built up to a great blaze and glow and he spoke in a queer sing-song tone through his teeth. "He asked after you real kind. He wanted to know how you was gettin' on with the education he's ben handin' out to you. I tell him that you was right satisfied with me an' my ways an' hed quit his books. I didn't know as you was hev'in' such a good time durin' my absence."

Joan was cruelly hurt. His words seemed to fall heavily upon her heart. "I wasn't hev'in' a good time. I was missin' you, Pierre," said she in a low tremolo of grieving music. "Them books, they seemed like they was all the company I hed."

"You looked like you was missin' me," he sneered. "The sin-buster an' I had words about you, Joan. Yes'm, he give me quite a line of preachin' about you, Joan, as how you hed oughter develop yer own life in yer own way—along the lines laid out by him. I told him as how I knowed best what was right an' fittin' fer my own wife; as how, with a mother like you'n you needed watchin' more'n learnin'; as how you belonged to me an' not to him. An', says he, 'She don't belong to any man, Pierre Landis,' he said, 'neither to you nor to me. She belongs to her own self.' 'I'll see that she belongs to me,' I said. 'I'll fix her so she'll know it an' every other feller will.'"

At that he turned from the fire and straightened to his feet.

Joan moved backward slowly to the door. He had made no threatening sign or movement, but her fear had come overwhelmingly upon her and every instinct urged her to flight. But before she touched the handle of the door, he flung himself with deadly, swift force and silence across the room and took her in his arms. With all her wonderful strength, Joan could not break away from him. He dragged her back to the hearth, tied her elbows behind her with the scarf from his neck, that very scarf he had worn when the dawn had shed a wistful beauty upon him, waiting for her on a morning not so very long ago. Joan went weak.

"Pierre," she cried pitifully, "what are you a-goin' to do to me?"

He roped her to the heavy post of a set of shelves built against the wall. Then he stood away, breathing fast.

"Now whose gel are you, Joan Carver?" he asked her.

"You know I'm yours, Pierre," she sobbed. "You got no need to tie me to make me say that."

"I got to tie you to make you do more'n say it. I got to make sure you are it. He—fire won't take the sureness out of me after this."

She turned her head, all that she could turn.

He was bending over the fire, and when he straightened she saw that he held something in his hand . . . a long bar of metal, white at the shaped end. At once her memory showed her a broad glow of sunset falling over Pierre at work. "There'll be stock all over the country marked with them two bars," he had said. "The Two-Bar brand, don't you forget it!" She was not likely to forget it now.

She shut her eyes. He stepped close to her and jerked her blouse down from her shoulder. She writhed away from him, silent in her rage and fear and fighting dumbly. She made no appeal. At that moment her heart was so full of hatred that it was hardened to pride. He lifted his brand and set it against the bare flesh of her shoulder.

Then terribly she screamed. Again, when he took the metal away, she screamed. Afterward there was a dreadful silence.

Joan had not lost consciousness. Her healthy nerves stanchly received the anguish and the shock, nor did she make any further outcry. She pressed her forehead against the sharp edge of the shelf, she drove her nails into her hands, and at intervals she writhed from head to foot. Circles of pain spread from the deep burn on her shoulder, spread and shrank. The bones of her shoulder and arm ached terribly; fire still seemed to be eating into her flesh. The air was full of the smell of scorched skin so that she tasted it herself. And hotter than her hurt her heart burned, consuming its own tenderness and love and trust.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

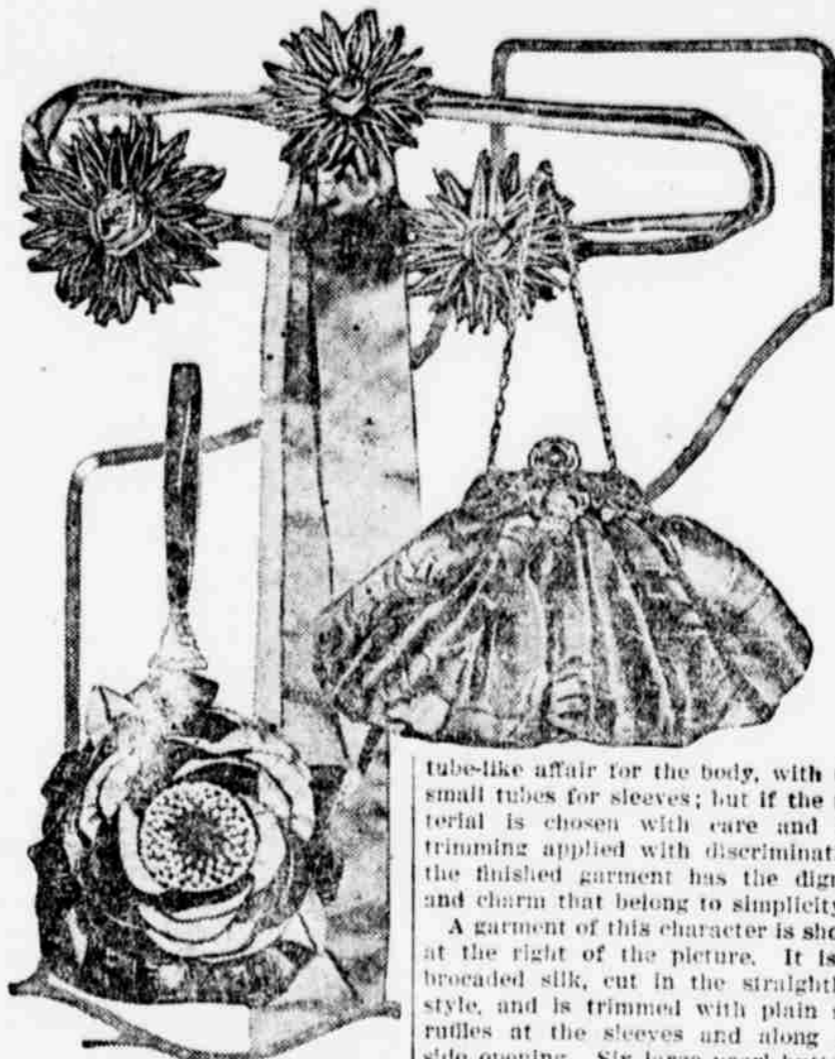
Great Soldier's Weakness. The great duke of Wellington was a believer in omens. The story is told that he would not offer battle on any day that he met or saw a yellow dog cross his path.

## Pretty Things that are made at Home

HOWEVER informed and purposeful women of today may be, however businesslike and practical, they show no disposition to turn their backs upon the pretty furbelows that it is the privilege of the gentler sex to wear. The more advanced they become, the more generally appreciative of the niceties of dress they are; the more alert and alive to its possibilities. The fall season is here and has brought with it the most elaborate and

make the rich bag shown at the right. The bag is lined with silk gathered at the top and sewed to a metal bag-top. A good quality of silk or satin lines these bags and often their handles are made of the ribbon or of silk cord, which is run through a casing near the top and out through openings at the side.

A frock, following the fashion of simplicity to its extreme, may consist of little more than one large



FOR THE HANDY NEEDLEWOMAN

diversified styles in all departments of dress that this generation has seen.

Taking dress accessories made of ribbon as an example, we find them in greater numbers than ever, and of ribbon girdles, sashes and bags it is safe to say that most of them are made at home. Women see them in the shops and copy them, and special designers keep turning out new models of these enticing and beautiful accessories.

A flower girdle and two bags are illustrated here. Those forerunners of the modern who occupy their leisure time making gifts a long way in advance of the holidays will find inspiration in these fine feminine belongings. Two-toned satin ribbon in peach and yellow is used for the lovely girdle—two lengths rolled and twisted together support three flowers, have pointed

tube-like affair for the body, with two small tubes for sleeves; but if the material is chosen with care and the trimming applied with discrimination, the finished garment has the dignity and charm that belong to simplicity.

A garment of this character is shown at the right of the picture. It is of broadened silk, cut in the straight-line style, and is trimmed with plain silk ruffles at the sleeves and along the side opening. Six large pearl buttons, and a belt of the material, contribute the proper finishing touches to this ingenious, practical and becoming frock.

The other extreme of the present fashions is illustrated in the frock shown at the left. This is of midnight-blue crepe de chine with a deep plaited lace bertha at the neck. The circular skirt is draped in a long spiral, beginning at the waistline. The cuffs are of Empire inspiration and are made of dark georgette, edged with lace, and caught up to the sleeves with flat velvet bows.

The first velvet evening gowns of the season have made their appearance and, naturally, they are shown in the long simple lines that are favored in coats and suits. Many are sleeveless, with long waistlines, and jeweled girdles about the hips. Underblouses of metallic cloth and brocade are beauti-



EXTREMES OF THE MODE

petals and little rose centers made of the ribbon. The girdle fastens with a snap fastener under one of the flowers and three ends of ribbon, in different lengths, fall from it. They are trimmed on the bias as the ends and the middle length show the darker side of the ribbon.

At the left a flower bag is shown made of two-toned (black and white) satin ribbon. Lengths of the ribbon are stitched together to form the bag and a flat rosette is set in a bow of ribbon on one of its sides. The center of the rosette is sprinkled with French knots in white silk floss, prettily simulating stamens of the flower.

Two widths of green and gold brocade ribbon are stitched together to

fully combined with the fashionable colors in velvet, beading is stronger than ever and a new development is beading appears in large, cut beads that resemble precious stones.

Julia Bottomley  
(©, 1923, Western Newspaper Union.)

A Practical Gown.

A frock of crepe de chine in shade of beige or gray made on straight lines and finished with collar and cuffs of colored linen frilled at the edges is as useful as it is smart. The sleeves are long and tight.

## SUFFERED MANY YEARS WITH FEMALE TROUBLE PE-RU-NA LIKE A GIFT FROM HEAVEN



Mrs. Katie Scheffel, R. F. D. No. 5, Lowell, Ohio

"I have been suffering for years with female trouble. Was operated on five years ago. It relieved me some but I did not regain my strength. Two years later was taken sick and bedfast several months. I treated a long while without much relief. I was discouraged, my mind affected, so nervous I could neither eat or sleep and unable to do anything.

We tried several doctors but one after another gave up my case as hopeless. Finally a good friend advised me to try Pe-ru-na. I did. It relieved me almost immediately. Your medical department said I was suffering from chronic catarrh of the system. I began taking your medicine in March, 1914, and continued until August. I took ten bottles of Pe-ru-na and three bottles of Man-a-lin and felt like a new person. Your medicine seemed like a gift from Heaven. It was like coming from darkness into light.

We have used your medicine since for coughs, colds and grip with good results. We will always keep it on hand. I weigh twenty-five pounds more than I ever did, eat and sleep well and can do a good day's work. Everybody says I look fine. Even the doctors are surprised. I cannot thank you enough and will always recommend Pe-ru-na to sufferers from catarrh."

MRS. KATIE SCHEFFEL, R. F. D. No. 5, Lowell, O.

Mrs. Scheffel is only one of many thousand women in the world, who owe their present health to Pe-ru-na. The record of this medicine is a proud one as Pe-ru-na has held the confidence of both sexes for fifty years or more.

If your trouble is due to a catarrhal inflammation in any organ or part of the body, do like Mrs. Scheffel. Try Pe-ru-na. Insist upon having the original and reliable remedy for catarrhal conditions. You won't be sorry.

Ask Your Dealer About This Old-Time Tried Remedy

## Imported Joke.

He—Why the deuce do I struggle with this piffing job?

Fair Typist—Don't be discouraged; think of the mighty oak—it was once a nut like you.—Boston Transcript.

## CHILDREN CRY FOR "CASTORIA"

Especially Prepared for Infants and Children of All Ages

Mother! Fletcher's Castoria has been in use for over 30 years to relieve babies and children of Constipation, Flatulency, Wind Colic and Diarrhea; allaying Feverishness arising therefrom, and by regulating the Stomach and Bowels, aids the assimilation of Food; giving natural sleep without opiates. The genuine bears signature

Chas. H. Fletcher.

## Still Same Age.

When mother introduced Dorothy to the culler she said: "My little girl was five years old yesterday."

"And I'm five years old today, too," said Dorothy.—Boston Transcript.

Baby's little dresses will just simply dazzle if Red Cross Ball Blue is used in the laundry. Try it and see for yourself. At all good grocers.—Advertisement.

## Differently Expressed.

"They used to call him a bonehead." "That was before he succeeded. Now they say he is a man of hard, solid sense."—Boston Transcript.

## Twisted.

"This question seems to puzzle you." "Not the question, but the answer."—London Answers.

## Hall's Catarrh Medicine

is a Combined Treatment, both local and internal, and has been successful in the treatment of Catarrh for over forty years. Sold by all druggists.

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## Clear Baby's Skin With Cuticura Soap and Talcum

Soap 25c, Ointment 25 and 50c, Talcum 25c.