

# The Branding Iron

By Katharine Newlin Burt

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### "YOU KILLED HIM"

Joan Landis, eight or nine 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 forces a cattle brand, Frank Hollivell, young minister, presents books to Joan. Pierre forbids her to read them. Mad-dened by jealousy, Pierre ties Joan and burns the Two-Bar brand into her shoulder. Hearing her screams, a stranger bursts into the house and shoots Pierre. The stranger revives Joan, telling her Pierre is dead. Joan and burns the Two-Bar brand into her shoulder. Hearing her screams, a stranger bursts into the house and shoots Pierre. The stranger revives Joan, telling her Pierre is dead. At the stranger's home Joan's injuries are attended to. She is introduced to a new world of books and fine clothing by the stranger, Prosper Gale, a writer.

### CHAPTER XII—Continued.

And then she opened her volume in its middle and her eye looked upon familiar lines—

"So the two brothers and their murdered man—"

Joan's heart fell like a leaden weight and the color dropped from her face. In an instant she was back in Pierre's room and the white night circled her in great silence and she was going over the story of her love and Pierre's—her love, their beautiful, grave, simple love that had so filled her life. And now where was she? In the house of the man who had killed her husband! She had been waiting for Hollivell, but for a long while now she had forgotten that. Why was she still here? A strange, guilty terror came with the question. She stared around the gorgeous little room, snug from the world, so secret in its winter canyon. She heard Wen Ho's incessant pattering in the kitchen, the crunch and thud of Prosper's shoveling outside. It was suddenly a horrible nightmare, or less a nightmare than a dream, pleasant in the dreaming, but hideous to an awakened mind. She was awake. That little homestead of Pierre's! Such a hunger opened in her soul that she bent her head and moaned. She could think of nothing now but those two familiar, bare, clean rooms—Pierre's gait, Pierre's rod, her own coat there by the door, the snowshoes. There was no place in her mind for the later tragedy. She had gone back of it. She would rather be alone in her own home, desolate though it was, than anywhere else in all the homeless world.

And what could prevent her from going? She laughed aloud—a short, defiant laugh—rippled to her feet, and in her room, took off Prosper's "pretty things" and got into her own old clothes; the coarse underwear, the heavy stockings and boots, the rough skirt, the man's shirt. How lonely they all hung! How thin she was! Now into her coat, her woolen cap down over her ears, her gloves—she was ready, her heart laboring like an exhausted stag's, her knees trembling, her wrists mysteriously absent. She went into the hall, found her snowshoes, bent to tie them on, and, straggling up, met Prosper, who had come in out of the snow.

He was glowing from exercise, but at sight of her and her pale excitement, the glow left him and his face went bleak and grim. He put out his hand and caught her by the arm and she backed from him against the wall—this before either of them spoke. "Where are you going, Joan?"

"I'm a-goin' home."

"He let go of her arm. "You were going like this, without a word to me?"

"Mr. Gael," she panted, "I had a feelin' like you wouldn't let me go."

He turned, threw open the door, and tapped aside. She confronted his white anger.

"Mr. Gael, I left Pierre dead. I've been a-waitin' for Mr. Hollivell to come. I'm strong now. I must be a-goin' home." Suddenly she blazed out: "You killed my man. What hev I to do with you?"

He bowed. Her breast labored and all the distress of her soul, troubled by an instinctive, inarticulate consciousness of evil, wavered in her eyes. Her reason already accused her of ingratitude and reanarchy, but every fiber of her had suddenly revolted. She was all for liberty, she must have it.

He was wise, made no attempt to hold her, let her go; but, as she fled under the firs, her webs sinking deep into the heavy, uncrusted snow, he stood and watched her keenly. He had not failed to notice the trembling of her body, the quick lift and fall of her breast, the rapid flushing and paling of her face. He let her go.

And Joan ran, drawing recklessly on the depleted store of what had always been her inexhaustible strength. The snow was deep and soft, heavy with moisture, the March air was moist, too, not keen with frost, and the green firs were softly dark against an even, stone-colored sky of cloud. To Joan's eyes, so long imprisoned, it was all astoundingly beautiful, clean and

grave, part of the old life back to which she was running. Down the canyon trail she floundered, her short skirt gathering a weight of snow, her webs lifting a mass of it at every tugging step. Her speed perforce slackened, but she plodded on, out of breath and in a sweat. She was surprised at the weakness; put it down to excitement. "I was afeared he'd make me stay," she said, and, "I've got to go. I've got to go." This went with her like a beating rhythm. She came to the opening in the firs, the foot of the steep trail, and out there stretched the valley, blank snow, blank sky, here and there a wooded ridge, then a range of lower hills, blue, snow-mottled; not a roof, not a thread of smoke, not a sound.

"I'm awful far away," Joan whispered to herself, and, for the first time in her life, she doubted her strength. "I don't rightly know where I am."

She looked back. There stood a high, familiar peak, but so were the outlines of these mountains jumbled and changed that she could not tell if Prosper's canyon lay north or south of Pierre's homestead. The former was high up on the foothills, and Pierre's was well down, above the river. From where she stood, there was no river-bed in sight. She tried to remember the journey, but nothing came to her except a confused impression of following, following, following. Had they gone toward the river first and then turned north or had they traveled close to the base of the giant range? The ranger's cabin where they had spent the night, surely that ought to be visible. If she went farther out, say beyond the wooded spur which shut the mountain country from her sight, perhaps she would find it.

Bravely she braced her quivering ankles and went on. She plunged into drifts, struggled up; sometimes the snow-plane seemed to stand up like a wall in front of her, the far hills tolling like a dragon along its top. She could not keep the breath of



Prosper Took Her by the Shoulder and Turned Her Over in the Snow.

her lungs. Often she sank down and rested; when things grew steady she got up and worked on. Each time she rested she crouched longer; each time made slower progress; and always the goal she had set herself, the end of a jutting hill, thrust itself out, nosed forward, sliding down to the plain. It began to darken, but Joan thought that her sight was failing. The enormous efforts she was making took every atom of her will. At last her muscles refused obedience, her laboring heart stopped. She stood a moment, swayed, fell, and this time she made no effort to rise. She had become a dark spot on the snow, a lifeless part of the loneliness and silence.

A small, black, energetic figure came out from among the firs and ran forward where the longest shadows pointed. It looked absurdly tiny and anxious; futile, in its pigmy haste, across the exquisite stillness. Joan, lying so still, was acquiescent; this little striving thing rebelled. It came forward steadily, following Joan's uneven tracks, stamping them down firmly to make a solid path, and, as the sun dropped, leaving an immense gleaming depth of sky, he came down and bent over the black speck that was Joan.

Prosper took her by the shoulder and turned her over a little in the snow. Joan opened her eyes and looked at him. It was the dumb look of a beaten dog.

"Get up, child," he said, "and come home with me."

She struggled to her feet, he helping her; and silently, just as a savage woman no matter what her pain, will follow her man, so Joan followed the track he made by pressing the snow down betwixt her former steps. She was asked once, and

she nodded. She was pale, her eyes heavy, but she was glad to be found glad to be saved. He saw that, and he saw a dawning confusion in her eyes. At the end he drew her arm into his, and, when they came into the house, he knelt and took the snow-shoes from her feet, she drooping against the wall. He put a hand on each of her shoulders and looked reproach.

"You wanted to leave me, Joan? You wanted to leave me as much as that?"

She shook her head from side to side, then, drawing away, she stumbled past him into the room, dropped to the bearskin rug, and held out her hands to the flames. "It's awful good to be back," she said, and fell to sobbing. "I didn't think you'd be certain—I was thinkin' only of old things. I was homesick—me that has no home."

Her shaken voice was so wonderful a music that he stood listening with sudden tears in his eyes.

"An' I can't forget Pierre nor the life, Mr. Gael, an' when I think 'twas you that killed him, why, it breaks my heart. Oh, I know you had to do it. I saw. An' I couldn't 'a' stayed with him no more. What he did, it made me hate him—but you can't be thinkin' how it was with Pierre an' me before that night. We—was happy. I just to live with my father, Mr. Gael, an' he was an awful man, an' there was no lovin' between us, but when I first seen Pierre lookin' up at me, I first knowed what lovin' might be like. I just came away with him because he asked me. Oh, Mr. Gael, I can't forget him, even for 'latin'. That brand on my shoulder, it's all healed, but my heart's so hurtled, it's so hurtled. You killed him. Forgive me, please; I would love you if I could but somethin' makes me shake away from you—because Pierre's dead."

Again she wept, exhausted, broken-hearted weeping it was. And Prosper's face was drawn by pity of her. That story of her life and love, it was a sort of saga, something as moving as an old ballad most beautifully sung. The varied and vibrant cadences of her voice gave every delicate standing of feeling, of thought. She was utterly expressive. All night, after he had seen her err and sent her to her bed, the phrases of her music kept repeating themselves in his ears. "An' so I first knowed what lovin' might be like"; and, "I would love you, only somethin' makes me shake away from you—because Pierre's dead." This was a Joan he had not yet realized, and he knew that after all his enchanted leopards was a woman and that his wooing of her had hardly yet begun. So did she baffle him by the utter directness of her heart. There was so little of a barrier against him and yet—there was so much.

For the first time he doubted his wizardry, and at that, his desire for the wild girl's love stood up like a giant and gripped his soul.

Joan slept deeply, without dreams; she had confessed herself. But Prosper was as restless and troubled as a youth. She had not made her escape; she had followed him home with humility, with confusion in her eyes. She had been glad to hold out her hands again to the fire on his hearth. And yet—he was now her prisoner.

### CHAPTER XIII

Nerves and intuition, "Mr. Gael," said Joan standing before him at the breakfast-table, "I'm a-goin' to work."

She was pale, gaunt and imperturbable. She announced this decision and sat down.

"Woman's work?" he asked her, smiling quizzically.

"No, sir," with her own rare smile; "I ain't rightly fitted for that."

"Certainly not in those clothes," he murmured crossly, for she was dressed again in her own things.

"I'm a-goin' to do man's work, I'm a-goin' to shovel snow an' help fetch wood an' kerry in water. You tell your Chinese man, please."

"And you're not going to read or study any more?"

"Yes, sir. I like that. If you still want to teach me, Mr. Gael, but I'm a-goin'—I'm going—to get some action. I'll just die if I don't. Why, I'm so poor I can't hardly lift a broom. I don't know why I'm so miserably poor, Mr. Gael."

She twisted her brows anxiously.

"You've had a nervous breakdown."

"A what?"

"A nervous breakdown."

He lit his cigarette and watched her in his usual lazy, smoke-veiled manner, but she might have noticed the shakiness of his self-assurance.

"Say, now," said Joan, "what's the name for it?"

"There's a book about it over there—third volume on the top shelf—look up your case."

With an air of profound alarm she went over and took it out.

### Not to Her Liking

Madge—How was the yachting party?

Marlo—So-so. There were so many on board the boat the best Char'ly could do was to hug the shore.

## Iowa Boy's Steer Is Grand Champion

### Careful Attention and Good Feeding Responsible for His Success

When Wayne Probst, a thirteen-year-old farm boy from West Liberty, Iowa, visited the 1922 International Live Stock exposition at Chicago and staged a meat-cutting demonstration in the boys and girls' club department, he examined the wonderful animals on display and vowed that some day he would be an exhibitor and lead his own animal into the arena.

#### Champion at Iowa.

During the winter and spring Wayne carefully tended the pure bred Hereford steer which he had entered in his county baby beef club, and when the state competition was held at Des Moines during the Iowa state fair, his pet, Bonnie Arbor, was declared champion Hereford baby beef and reserve grand champion of the show. Although he was offered 20 cents a pound



Wayne Probst and His Champion Hereford Steer.

for the animal, Wayne refused to sell him, since he had set his mind upon fitting him for the supreme show at Chicago the first week in December.

Wayne has been in the boys' club work for six years and has been a consistent winner at the Muscatine county fair. This year his entry won over 52 head at West Liberty and was sent on to Des Moines to compete for the championship of the state. At the state fair there were over 450 baby beves entered in the classes, making the strongest show of these animals at any state fair.

#### Wins Trip to Chicago.

In addition to the prize money which Wayne won at the county and state fairs, he was also awarded a free trip to Chicago and will join the thousand or more juniors who will attend the International as a reward for excellent in their club work activities.

Wayne purchased Bonnie Arbor from a local breeder and although the animal was of excellent ancestry, those who know the boy state that his success was due to the care and feeding which were given to his pet. When started on feed December 20th, the steer weighed 490 pounds, and on August 9th he had exactly doubled his weight, balancing the beam at 980 pounds. This gain was put on at a cost of 8 1-3 cents per pound, and at the rate of 2.12 pounds per day.

Wayne attributes much of his success to the inspiration which he received at Chicago while attending the International Live Stock exposition last December. Within two weeks after returning home he started his calf on feed, and all during the succeeding months the high standard of the animals he saw at Chicago was kept constantly in mind and spurred him on to greater effort.

## Soy Bean Stubble Makes Fine Seed Bed for Wheat

Soy-bean stubble makes an excellent seed bed for wheat and experimental work has shown that the wheat yield may be increased 25 per cent by sowing after soy beans. Most growers make the practice of harvesting the beans with a sweep rake and following immediately with the wheat drill. No seed-bed preparation is necessary, and this is one of the important factors in the economical production of wheat.

## Corn for Silage Must Be Cut Fine and Trampled

Corn for silage must be cut fine and trampled well into the silo, if it is desired to make the best quality of feed and fill the silo to its greatest capacity, says the Department of Agriculture. The usual length of cutting varies from one-fourth of an inch to one inch, but the latter is a little too long, as the pieces do not pack so readily in the silo, and they are not so completely consumed in feeding as the shorter lengths.

## Hogs Show Good Profit by Hogging Down Corn

Some practical feeders seem to question the advisability of hogging down corn at present prices, but plenty of tests show that hogs give as much profit when they are allowed to help themselves as when the corn is fed by hand—in fact, these same hogs will show greater profit by hogging down corn than digging it out of mucky feed-lots.

## Prevent Diseases by Exercising Good Care

### Seed Bed Often Is Source of Various Plant Ailments.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

Cabbage and other crucifers, such as brussels sprouts, kohlrabi, kale, turnips, radish, rape, rutabaga and charlock, are subject to fungous and bacterial diseases which are carried from place to place by various means, including insects, infected seed, transplanting from an infected seedbed to field, drainage, cabbage refuse and the other plants mentioned, and stable manure, farm animals and tools, and wind. These diseases are preventable in the main by simple means of plant sanitation, says the United States Department of Agriculture, even as human diseases may largely be prevented by proper care.

As the seedbed is often the source of infection, the truck farmer will find it profitable to take the greatest pains to insure healthy plants. Locate the seedbed on new ground if possible, advises the department. Crop rotation, avoiding crops which belong to the cabbage family, will help and is worth while, regardless of whether or not it is necessary to control plant maladies. A good rotation system will starve out many fungous diseases that may exist and will help control many weeds, particularly wild mustard and its relatives, which harbor cabbage pests.

The leaf diseases of cabbage, cauliflower, and related crops are relatively so unimportant that spraying is seldom required. The most important diseases are internal or soil parasites, which are out of reach of fungicides. The free use of lime will help in controlling such parasites and the disinfecting of all cabbage seed before planting, to prevent black rot and black leg, will be found of considerable value, according to tests carried on by the department. The use of disease-resistant varieties of cabbage and other crucifers will also pay.

## Artificial Lighting of Henhouse Is Permanent

The artificial lighting of henhouses has become permanent and popular during the last few years. Contrary to the first opinions of some people, electric lights are not installed for the purpose of fooling the hens. The use of lights merely endeavors to aid in duplicating spring conditions whereby hens have more opportunity to consume a large amount of feed and thus have material in which to manufacture a large number of eggs. Lights in the evening will give the hens less time between the last evening meal and the first one in the morning, so that the crop never gets empty.

## Fairly Good Silage Can Be Made Out of Alfalfa

Because of the abundance of protein in alfalfa and the shortage of sugars and starches, it is hard to make really first-class alfalfa silage. At the Missouri station, however, they found that if care was taken, a fairly good grade of silage could be made out of alfalfa. The important thing was to let the alfalfa dry enough so that at the time of putting it into the silo it contained 30 to 45 per cent of dry matter. When it contains more water than this, it seems to make a sloppy, foul-smelling silage. The best plan seems to be to let the crop lie in the swath for a few hours after mowing until it is well wilted, but not dry.

## Good Silage Serves as Substitute for Pasture

Feeding trials at the Kansas agricultural experiment station at Manhattan indicate that the silo is a money-maker wherever eight head of cows are milked. Good silage serves as a substitute for pasture during fall, winter and early spring. Silage can be profitably fed to dairy cows in Kansas nine months of the year.

There is a prevalent idea among farmers that it does not pay to put a good corn crop in the silo. As a matter of fact, the better the corn yield the better will be the silage and the greater the amount of foliage which may be fully utilized.

## Two Plants Practically Alike Above the Ground

Sudan grass is sometimes mistaken for Johnson grass, as the two plants are practically alike above the ground. The Sudan seed, however, is a little larger and plumper than the Johnson grass seed. And there is a wide difference in the roots and the habits of growth of the two plants. Johnson grass has underground running root-stocks from which it grows from year to year. Sudan grass, on the contrary, has short, fibrous roots and grows only one year. Therefore it never becomes a troublesome weed like Johnson grass.

## Soil Prepared for Soy Beans by Fall Plowing

Soil preparation for soy beans is the same as for corn. Where it is advisable to plow in the fall for corn, then it is advisable to plow in the fall for soy beans. The clay lands should be fall plowed, and in the spring disked, harrowed, and made smooth by the drag and plow. For light, sandy soils spring plowing is preferable. On clay and sandy loam soils both spring and fall plowing are equally satisfactory.

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"Only three miles," said the passenger. "Then it's funny we can't see it."

"Oh," returned the skipper, "that's because the water isn't clear enough."

Sincerity.

Jud Tunkins says it's impossible to be absolutely sincere all the time, otherwise you'd often have to think up something besides "Dear Sir" in starting a letter.

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