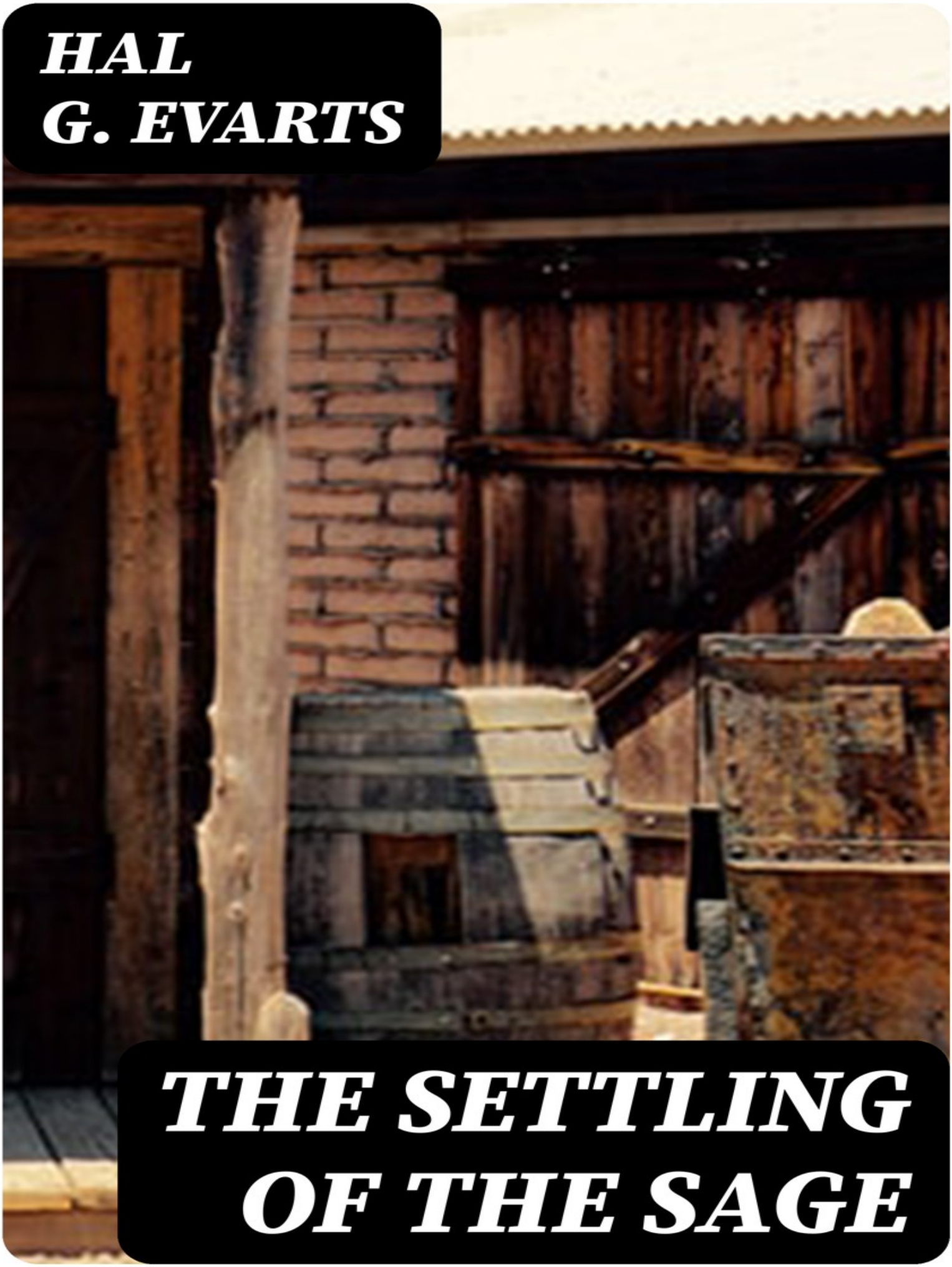
HAL G. EVARTS



THE SETTLING OF THE SAGE

Hal G. Evarts

The Settling of the Sage

EAN 8596547355526

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

I

Table of Contents

A rider jogged northward along the road on a big pinto horse, a led buckskin, packed, trailing a half-length behind. The horseman traveled with the regulation outfit of the roaming range dweller—saddle, bed roll and canvas war bag containing personal treasures and extra articles of attire—but this was supplemented by two panniers of food and cooking equipment and a one-man teepee that was lashed on top in lieu of canvas pack cover. A ranch road branched off to the left and the man pulled up his horse to view a sign that stood at the forks.

"Squatter, don't let the sun go down on you," he read. "That's the third one of those reminders, Calico," he told the horse. "The wording a little different but the sentiment all the same."

Fifty yards off the trail the charred and blackened fragments of a wagon showed in sharp contrast to the bleached white bones of two horses.

"They downed his team and torched his worldly goods," the rider said. "All his hopes gone up in smoke."

He turned in his saddle and looked off across the unending expanse of sage. Coldriver—probably so named from the fact that the three wells in the town constituted the only source of water within an hour's ride—lay thirty miles to the south, a cluster of some forty buildings nestling on a wind-swept flat. Seventy miles beyond it, and with but two more such centers of civilization between, the railroad stretched across the rolling desolation. North of him the hills

lifted above the sage, angling with the directions so that four miles along the Three Bar road that branched off to the left would bring him to their foot and a like distance along the main fork saw its termination at Brill's store, situated in a dent in the base of the hills, the end of the Coldriver Trail.

The man took one more look at the evidence left behind to prove that the sign was no empty threat before heading the paint-horse along the left-hand fork. The crisp cool of early spring was blown down from the slope of the hills. Old drifts, their tops gray-streaked with dust, lay banked in the gulches and on sheltered east slopes, but the new grass had claimed the range to the very foot of the drifts, the green of it intensified in patches watered by the trickle that seeped from the downhill extremities of the snow banks. He noted that the range cows along his route were poor and lean, their hip bones showing lumpily through sagging skin, giving them the appearance of milkers rather than of beef stock. The preceding summer had been hot and dry, browning the range six weeks before its time, and the stock had gone into the winter in poor shape. Heavy snowfalls had completed the havoc and ten per cent. of the range stock had been winter-killed. Those that had pulled through were slow in putting on weight and recovering their strength.

A big red steer stood broadside to him, the Three Bar brand looming on its side, and the man once more pulled up his horse and lost himself in retrospection as he gazed at the brand.

"The old Three Bar, Calico," he remarked to the horse. "The old home brand. It's been many a moon since last I laid an eye on a Three Bar cow."

The man was gazing directly at the steer but he no longer saw it. Instead he was picturing the old-time scenes that the sight of the brand recalled. Step by step he visioned the long trail of the Three Bar cows from Dodge City to the Platte, from the Platte to the rolling sage-clad hills round old Fort Laramie and from Laramie to the present range. Many times he had heard the tale, and though most of the scenes had been enacted before his birth, they were impressed so firmly upon his mind by repetition that it seemed as if he himself had been a part of them.

His mind pictured two boys of somewhere round eighteen years of age setting forth from the little home town of Kansas City, nestling at the confluence of the Missouri and the Kaw. A year later Cal Warren was whacking bulls on the Santa Fe Trail while the other, William Harris, was holding the reins over four plunging horses as he tooled a lumbering Concord stage over the trail from Omaha to the little camp called Denver.

It was five years before their trails crossed again. Cal Warren was the first of the two to wed, and he had established a post along the trail, a rambling structure of 'dobe, poles and sod, and there conducted the business of "Two for One," a calling impossible and unknown in any other than that day and place.

The long bull trains were in sight from horizon to horizon every hour of the day. The grind of the gravel wore down the hoofs of the unshod oxen, and when footsore they could not go on. One sound bull for two with tender feet was Warren's rule of trade. These crippled ones were soon made sound in the puddle pen, a sod corral flooded with sufficient water to

puddle the yellow clay into a six-inch layer of stiff, healing mud, then thrown out on the open range to fatten and grow strong. But transitions were swift and sweeping. Steel rails were crowding close behind the prairie schooners and the ox-bows. Bull trains grew fewer every year and eventually Cal Warren made his last trade of two for one.

Bill Harris had come back to view the railroad of which he had heard so much and he remained to witness and to be a part of the wild days of Abilene, Hays and Dodge, as each attained the apex of its glory as the railroad's end and the consequent destination of the Texas trail herds. The sight of these droves of thousands implanted a desire to run cows himself and when he was wed in Dodge he broached this project to his boyhood pal.

It was the sincere wish of each to gain the other as a partner in all future enterprise, but this was not to be. Warren had seen the bottom drop out of the bull trade and he would not relinquish the suspicion that any business dealing in four-footed stock was hazardous in the extreme and he insisted that the solution of all their financial problems rested upon owning land, not cows. Harris could not be induced to farm the soil while steers were selling round eight dollars a head.

Warren squatted on a quarter of land. Harris bought a few head of she-stock and grazed his cows north and west across the Kansas line into the edge of the great unknown that was styled Nebraska and Northwest District. At first his range was limitless, but in a few short years he could stand on the roof of his sod hut and see the white points of light which were squatters' wagons dotting the range to the far

horizon in any direction he chose to look. The first of these to invade his range had been Cal Warren, moving on before the swarm of settlers flocking into the locality of his first choice in such alarming numbers that he feared an unhealthy congestion of humanity in the near future. The debate of farming versus cows was resumed between the two, but each held doggedly to his own particular views and the longed-for partnership was again postponed.

Harris moved once more—and then again—and it was something over two decades after his departure from Dodge with the Three Bar cows that he made one final shift, faring on in search of that land where nesters were unknown. He made a dry march that cost him a fourth of his cows, skirted the Colorado Desert and made his stand under the first rim of the hills. Those others who came to share this range were men whose views were identical with his own, whose watchword was: "Our cows shall run free on a thousand hills." They sought for a spot where the range was untouched by the plow and the water holes unfenced. They had moved, then moved again, driven on before the invasion of the settlers. These men banded together and swore that here conditions should be reversed, that it was the squatter who should move, and on this principle they grimly rested.

Cal Warren had been the vanguard of each new rush of settlers that had pushed Bill Harris on to another range, and the cowman had come to see the hand of fate in this persistence. The nesters streamed westward on all the trails, filing their rights on the fertile valleys and pushing those who would be cattle barons undisputed back into the

more arid regions. When the Warren family found him out again and halted their white-topped wagon before his door, Bill Harris gave it up.

"I've come up to see about getting that partnership fixed up, Bill," Warren greeted. "You know—the one we talked over in Dodge a while ago, about our going in together when either of us changed his mind. Well, I've changed mine. I've come to see that running cows is a good game, Bill, so let's fix it up. I've changed my mind."

"That was twenty years ago, Cal," Harris said. "But it still holds good—only I've changed my mind too. You was dead right from the first. Squatters will come to roost on every foot of ground and there'll come a day when I'll have to turn squatter myself—so I might as well start now. The way to get used to crowds, Cal, is to go where the crowds are at. I'm headed back for Kansas and you better come along. We'll get that partnership fixed up."

A single child had come to bless each union in the parents' late middle age. The Harris heir, a boy of eight, had been named Calvin in honor of his father's friend. Cal Warren had as nearly returned the compliment as circumstances would permit, and his three-year-old daughter bore the name of Williamette Ann for both father and mother of the boy who was his namesake, and Warren styled her Billie for short.

Each man was as stubbornly set in his new views as he had been in the old. The Harrises came into possession of the Warrens' prairie schooner and drove off to the east. The Warrens took over the Three Bar brand and the little

Williamette Ann slept in the tiny bunk built for the son of the Harris household.

For a space of minutes these old pictures occupied the mind of the man on the pinto horse. The led buckskin moved fretfully and tugged on the lead rope, rousing the man from his abstraction. Distant strings of prairie schooners and ox-bows faded from his mind's eye and he way once more conscious of the red steer with the Three Bar brand that had stirred up the train of reflections. He turned for another glimpse of the distant sign as he headed the paint-horse along the road.

"All that was quite a spell back, Calico," he said. "Old Bill Harris planted the first one of those signs, and it served a good purpose then. It's a sign that stands for lack of progress to-day. Times change, and it's been eighteen years or so since old Bill Harris left."

The road traversed the bench, angled down a side hill to a valley somewhat more than a mile across. Calico pricked his ears sharply toward the Three Bar buildings that stood at the upper end of it.

Curious eyes peered from the bunk house as he neared it, for the paint-horse and the buckskin were not without fame even if the man himself were a stranger to them all. For the better part of a year the two high-colored horses had been seen on the range,—south to the railroad, west to the Idaho line. The man had kept to himself and when seen by approaching riders he had always been angling on a course that would miss their own. Those who had, out of curiosity, deliberately ridden out to intercept him reported that he

seemed a decent sort of citizen, willing to converse on any known topics except those which concerned himself.

He dropped from the saddle before the bunk house and as he stood in the door he noted half a dozen men lounging on the bunks. This indolence apprised him of the fact that they were extra men signed on for the summer season and that their pay had not yet started, for the cowhand, when on the pay roll, works sixteen hours daily and when he rests or frolics it is, except in rare instances, on his own time and at his own expense.

A tall, lean individual, who sat cross-legged on a bunk, engaged in mending a spur strap, was the first to answer his inquiry for the foreman.

"Billie Warren is the big he-coon of the Three Bar," he informed. "You'll likely find the boss at the blacksmith shop." The lanky one grinned as the stranger turned back through the litter of log outbuildings, guided by the hissing squeak of bellows and the clang of a sledge on hot iron. Several men pressed close to the windows in anticipation of viewing the newcomer's surprise at greeting the Three Bar boss. But the man did not seem surprised when a young girl emerged from the open door of the shop as he neared it.

She was clad in a gray flannel skirt and black Angora chaps. The heavy brown hair was concealed beneath the broad hat that was pulled low over her eyes after the fashion of those who live much in the open. The man removed his hat and stood before her.

"Miss Warren?" he inquired. The girl nodded and waited for him to state his purpose.

"What are the chances of my riding for the Three Bar?" he asked.

"We're full-handed," said the girl. "I'm sorry."

"You'll be breaking out the remuda right soon now," he suggested. "I'm real handy round a breaking corral."

"They're all handy at that," she said. Then she noted the two horses before the bunk house and frowned. Her eyes searched the stranger's face and found no fault with it; she liked his level gaze. But she wondered what manner of man this was who had so aimlessly wandered alone for a year and avoided all other men.

"Since you've finally decided to work, how does it happen that you choose the Three Bar?" she asked, then flushed under his eyes as she remembered that so many men had wished to ride for her brand more than for another, their reasons in each case the same.

"Because the Three Bar needs a man that has prowled this country and gathered a few points about what's going on," he returned.

"And that information is for sale to any brand that hires you!" said the girl. "Is that what you mean?"

"If it was, there would be nothing wrong with a man's schooling himself to know all points of his job before he asked for it," he said. "But it happens that wasn't exactly my reason."

A shade of weariness passed over her face. During the two years that her father had been confined to the house after being caved in by a horse and in the one year that had elapsed since his death the six thousand cows that had

worn the Three Bar brand on the range had decreased by almost half under her management.

"I'll put you on," she said. "But you'll probably be insulted at what I have to offer. The men start out after the horses to-morrow. I want a man to stay here and do tinkering jobs round the place till they get back."

"That'll suit me as well as any," he accepted promptly. "I'm a great little hand at tinkering round."

The clang of the sledge had ceased and a huge, fat man loomed in the door of the shop and mopped his dripping face with a bandanna.

"I'm glad you've come," he assured the new-comer. "A man that's not above doing a little fixing up! A cowhand is the most overworked and underpaid saphead that ever lost three nights' sleep hand running and worked seventy-two hours on end; sleep in the rain or not at all—to hold a job at forty per for six months in the year. The other six he's throwed loose like a range horse to rustle or starve. Hardest work in the world—but he don't know it, or money wouldn't hire him to lift his hand. He thinks it's play. Not one out of ten but what prides himself that he can't be browbeat into doing a tap of work. Ask him to cut a stick of firewood and he'll arch his back and laugh at you scornful like. Don't that beat hell?"

"It do," said the stranger.

"I'm the best wagon cook that ever sloshed dishwater over the tail-gate, and even better than that in a ranch-house kitchen," the loquacious one modestly assured him. "But I can't do justice to the meals when I lay out to do all the chores within four miles and run myself thin collecting

scraps and squaw wood to keep the stove het up. Now since Billie has hired you, I trust you'll work up a pile of wood that will keep me going—and folks call me Waddles," he added as an afterthought.

"Very good, Mr. Waddles," the newcomer smiled. "You shall have your fuel."

The big man grinned.

"That title is derived from my shape and gait," he informed. "My regular name is Smith—if you're set on tacking a Mister on behind it."

The girl waved the talkative cook aside and turned to the new hand.

"You'll take it then."

He nodded.

"Could you spare me about ten minutes some time to-day?" he asked.

"Yes," she said. "I'll send for you when I have time."

The man headed back for his horses and unlashed the buckskin's top-pack, dropping it to the ground, then led the two of them back toward the corral, stripped the saddle from the pinto, the side panniers and packsaddle from the buckskin and turned them into the corral. He rambled among the outbuildings on a tour of inspection and the girl saw him stand long in one spot before the solid log cabin, now used as a storeroom for odds and ends, that had been the first one erected on the Three Bar and had sheltered the Harrises before her father took over their brand.

II

Table of Contents

The Three Bar girl sat looking from the window of her own room, the living room of the ranch house, one end of which was curtained off to serve as sleeping quarters. The rattle of pots and pans came from the big room in the rear which was used by Waddles as a kitchen and dining hall for the hands. The new man was still prowling about the place, inspecting every detail, and she wondered if he could tell her anything which would prove of benefit in her fight to stop the shrinkage of the Three Bar herds and help her to face the drastic changes that were reshaping the policies of the range country.

The Three Bar home range was one of many similar isolated spots where the inhabitants held out for a continuance of the old order of things. All through the West, from the Mexican border to the Canadian line, a score of bitter feuds were in progress, the principles involved differing widely according to conditions and locality. There were existing laws,—and certain clans that denied the justice of each one, holding out against its enforcement and making laws of their own. In some spots the paramount issue was over the relative grazing rights of cows and sheep, fanning a flame of hatred between those whose occupations were in any way concerned with these rival interests. In others the stockmen ignored the homestead laws which proclaimed that settlers could file their rights on land. As always before, wherever men resorted to lawlessness to protect their fancied rights, the established

order of things had broken down, all laws disregarded instead of the single one originally involved.

In many communities these clashes between rival interests had furnished opportunity for rustlers to build up in power and practically take the range. Each clan was outside the law in some one particular and so could not have recourse to it against those who violated it in some other respect; could not appear against neighbors in one matter lest their friends do likewise against themselves in another.

This attitude had enabled the wild bunch to saddle themselves on certain communities and ply their trade without restraint. Rustling had come to be a recognized occupation to be reckoned with; the identity of the thieves was often known, and they visited from ranch to ranch, whose owners possibly were honest themselves but had friends among the outlaws for whom the latch-string was always out. The rustlers' toll was in the nature of a tribute levied against every brand and the various outfits expected certain losses from this source. It was good business to recoup these losses at another's expense and thus neighbor preyed on neighbor. Big outfits fought to crush others who would start up in a small way, and between periods of defending their own interests against the rustlers they hired them to harry their smaller competitors from the range; clover for outlaws where all factions, by mutual assent, played their own hands without recourse to the law. It was a case of dog eat dog and the slogan ran: "Catch your calves in a basket or some other thief will put his iron on them first."

It was to this pass that the Three Bar home range had come in the last five years. As Billie Warren watched the new hand moving slowly toward the bunk house she pondered over what manner of man this could be who had played a single-handed game in the hills for almost a year. Was he leagued with the wild bunch, with the law, or was he merely an eccentric who might have some special knowledge that would help her save the Three Bar from extinction?

The stranger picked up his bed roll and disappeared through the bunk-house door as she watched him.

The lean man who had first greeted him jerked a thumb toward an unoccupied bunk.

"Pay roll?" he inquired; then, as the new man nodded, "I'm most generally referred to as Lanky," he offered tentatively. "Evans is the rest of it."

The stranger hesitated appreciably; then:

"Harris will do all right for me—Cal for every day," he returned and introductions had been effected. It was up to each man to use his own individual method of making his name known to the newcomer as occasion arose.

There had been much speculation about the brand worn by the two horses. The hands were a drifting lot, gathered from almost as many points as there were men present, but none of them knew the brand.

A dark, thin-faced man with a slender black mustache was the first to voice a query, not from the fact that his curiosity was large—it was perhaps less than that of any other man in the room—but for the reason that he chose to satisfy it at once. Morrow's personality was cold and bleak,

inviting no close friendships or intimacies; uncommunicative to a degree that had impressed itself on his companions of the last few days and they looked up, mildly surprised at his abrupt interrogation.

"Box L," he commented. "Where does that brand run?"

"Southwest Kansas and Oklahoma," the stranger answered.

"Squatter country," Morrow said. "Every third section under fence."

Harris sat looking through the door at the valley spread out below and after a moment he answered the thrust as if he had been long prepared for it.

"Yes," he said. "And that's what all range country will come to in a few more years; farm what they can and graze what they can't—and the sooner the better for all concerned." He waved an arm down the valley. "Good alfalfa dirt going to waste down there—overrun with sage and only growing enough grass to keep ten cows to the quarter. If that was ripped up and seeded to hay it would grow enough to winter five thousand head."

This remark led to the old debate that was never-ending in the cow country, breaking out afresh in every bunk house and exhaustively rediscussed. There were men there who had viewed both ends of the game,—had seen the foremost outfits in other parts tearing up the sage and putting in hay for winter feed and had seen that this way was good.

Evans regarded Harris curiously as he deliberately provoked the argument, then sat back and listened to the various ideas of the others as the discussion became heated and general. It occurred to Evans that Harris was classifying

the men by their views, and when the argument lagged the lean man grinned and gave it fresh impetus.

"It's a settled fact that the outfits that have put in hay are better off," he said. "But there's a dozen localities like this, a dozen little civil wars going on right now where the inhabitants are so mulish that they lay their ears and fight their own interests by upholding a flea-bit prejudice that was good for twenty years ago but is a dead issue to-day."

"And why is it dead to-day?" Morrow demanded. "And not as good as it always was?"

"Only a hundred or so different reasons," Evans returned indifferently. "Then beef-tops brought ten dollars a head and they're worth three times that now; then you bought a brand on the hoof, come as they run, for round five dollars straight through, exclusive of calves; now it's based at ten on the round-up tally. In those days a man could better afford to let part of his cows winter-kill than to raise feed to winter the whole of them through—among other things. These days he can't."

"And have your water holes fenced," Morrow said. "As soon as you let the first squatter light."

"The government has prohibited fencing water holes necessary to the adjacent range," Harris cut in. "If that valley was mine I'd have put it in hay this long time back."

"But it wasn't yours," Morrow pointed out.

"No; but it is now, or at least a part of it is," Harris said. "I picked up that school section that lays across the valley and filed on a home quarter that butts up against the rims." He sat gazing indifferently out the door as if unconscious of the

dead silence that followed his remark. More men had drifted in till nearly a dozen were gathered in the room.

"That's never been done out here—buying school sections and filing squatter's rights," Morrow said at last. "This is cow country and will never be anything else."

"Good cow country," Harris agreed. "And it stands to reason it could be made better with a little help."

"Whenever you start helping a country with fence and plow you ruin it for cows," Morrow stated. "I know!"

"It always loomed up in the light of a good move to me," the newcomer returned. "One of us has likely read his signs wrong."

"There's some signs round here you better read," Morrow said. "They were posted for such as you."

"It appears like I'd maybe made a bad selection then. I'm sorry about that," Harris deprecated in a negligent tone that belied his words. "It's hard to tell just how it will pan out."

"Not so very hard—if you can read," the dark man contradicted.

The newcomer's gaze returned from down the valley and settled on Morrow's face.

"Do you run a brand of your own—so's you'd stand to lose a dollar if every foot of range was fenced?" he inquired.

"What are you trying to get at now?" Morrow demanded.

"Nothing much—now; I've already got," Harris said. "A man's interest lays on the side where his finances are most concerned."

"What do you mean by that?" Morrow insisted.

"You're good at predicting—maybe you're an expert at guessing too," Harris returned. And suddenly Evans laughed

as if something had just occurred to him.

Morrow glanced at him without turning his head, then fell silent, his expression unchanged.

A chunky youngster stood in the door and bent an approving gaze on the big pinto as he swung out across the pasture lot. The boy's face was small and quizzical, a shaggy mop of tawny hair hanging so low upon his forehead that his mild blue eyes peered forth from under the fringe of it and gave him the air of a surprised terrier, which effect had gained him the title of Bangs.

"I bet the little paint-horse could make a man swing and rattle to set up in his middle, once he started to act up," he said.

"Calico wouldn't know how to start," Harris said. "A horse, inside his limitations, is what his breaker makes him. I never favored the idea of breaking a horse to fight you every time you climb him. My horses are gentle-broke."

"But you have to be able to top off just any kind of a horse," Bangs objected.

"That don't hinder a man from gentling his own string," Harris returned.

Bangs turned his surprised eyes on Harris and regarded him intently as if striving to fathom a viewpoint that was entirely new to him.

"Why, it don't, for a fact," he said at last. "Only I just never happened to think of it like that before."

Morrow laughed and the boy flushed at the disagreeable ring of it. The sound was not loud but flat and mirthless, the syllables distinct and evenly spaced. His white even teeth remained tight-closed and showed in flashing contrast to his

swarthy face and black mustache. Morrow's face wore none of the active malignancy that stamps the features of those uncontrolled desperadoes who kill in a flare of passion; rather it seemed that the urge to kill was always with him, had been born with him, his face drawn and over-lengthened from the inner effort to render his homicidal tendencies submissive to his brain, not through desire for regeneration, for he had none, but as a mere matter of expediency. The set, bleak expression of countenance was but a reflection of his personality and his companions had sensed this strained quality without being able to define it in words.

"You listen to what the squatter man tells you," Morrow said to Bangs. "He'll put you right—give you a course in how everything ought to be done." He rose and went outside.

"That was a real unhumorous laugh," Evans said. "Right from the bottom of his heart."

A raucous bellow sounded from the cookhouse and every man within earshot rose and moved toward the summons to feed.

"Let's go eat it up," Evans said and left the bunk house with Harris.

"Did you gather all the information you was prospecting for?" he asked.

Harris nodded. "I sorted out one man's number," he said.

"Now if you'd only whispered to me I'd have told you right off," Evans said. "It's astonishing how easy it is to pick them if you try."

"Waddles is a right unpresuming sort of a man in most respects," Evans volunteered as they entered the

cookhouse. "But he's downright egotistical about his culinary accomplishments."

All through the meal the gigantic cook hovered near Billie Warren as she sat near one end of the long table. It was evident to Harris that the big man was self-appointed guardian and counsellor of the Three Bar boss. He showed the same fussy solicitude for her welfare that a hen would show for her helpless chicks.

"Praise the grub and have a friend at court," Harris murmured in Evans' ear.

Billie Warren had nearly completed her meal before the men came in. She left the table and went to her own room. When Harris rose to go he slapped the big man on the back.

"I'd work for half pay where you get grub like this," he said. "That's what I'd call a real feed."

Waddles beamed and followed him to the door.

"It's a fact that I can set out the best bait you ever throwed a lip over," he confessed. "You're a man of excellent tastes and it's a real pleasure to have you about."

Billie Warren opened the door and motioned to Harris. He went into the big front room that answered for both living room and sleeping quarters. A fire burned in the rough stone fireplace; tanned pelts, Indian curios and Navajo rugs covered the walls; more rugs and pelts lay on the floor. Indian blankets partitioned off one end for her sleeping room.

"You had something to tell me," she observed, after he had remained silent for the space of a minute, sitting in the chair she had indicated and gazing into the fire.

"And I'll have to start it a little different from the way I first counted on," he said. "Have any of the boys mentioned my name to you?"

She shook her head and waited for him to go on.

"You won't care much to hear it," he announced. "I'd thought some of spending two years here under some other name—but perhaps it's better to come out in the open—don't you think?"

The girl had straightened in her chair and was leaning toward him, her face white and her gray eyes boring straight into the man's. She knew now who he was,—the man she had more reason to despise than all others on earth combined. Of the Harris family she knew nothing at all except that her father's lifelong regret had been the fact that the partnership between himself and his oldest friend, William Harris, had never been brought to pass. And this regret had, in the end, led him to try and cement that arrangement in the second generation. Five years before his trail had crossed that of the elder Harris for the first time since he had taken over the Three Bar brand; and when his will had been read she had known that on the occasion of that visit his old friend had played upon this sentiment to trick him into making it. On all sides of her she had evidence that men were wolves who preyed upon the interests of others, and there was not a doubt that the father of the man before her had preyed upon her interests through the sentiment of her parent; no other possible theory could account for the strange disposal of his property, the will dated and signed at the exact time of his visit to the Harrises.