

again to look up the North Road. And there they stood, munching the doughnuts and gazing. It was a long wait.

"Ought to have been here an hour ago," said Bob Campbell, and the crowd grunted assent. Even old Prairie Dog, who had come over on the chance of a tuckout, seemed anxious. But perhaps he was figuring on the amount of broken victuals that would fall to his share.

But at last, through the moonlight, a team was seen coming. Not slow and steady, as if drawing a load of green wood, but furiously, both horses on the run. A yell went up from the crowd, "They're racing." The parson had been in the schoolhouse talking to the women, but at the noise he came running out and the rest followed him, all except Mirandy. She filled up Prairie Dog's bag, which that thoughtful red man had brought on the off chance.

The team came up with a rush to the door, and there was Bill, driving, but no wood. In his arms he held Jack, pale and speechless, his foot nearly sliced off by his axe. After it was bound up, and Jack made comfortable in bed, Bill told the story.

They had just about finished cutting their wood, and were both working like mad, when Bill heard a yell and look-up saw Jack pitch off his log into the snow. He rushed over, and found his chum with the blood pouring out of a big gash in his foot. He fixed him up as well as he could, but it took a long time, and then started for town.

Well, of course, we were no farther ahead. It did seem as if Mirandy never would get married. It was a trying situation. Kept us all puzzling while Jack lay at the parson's with his game foot, and Bill did his chores as well as his own. Spring came, the crops were put in with a rush, as they have to be out here, and then we had a few weeks to think things over.

Bill and Jack agreed that the third time would be the charm, and settle the affair, one way or another. They had talked a long time as to how they would decide. Jack wanted to spin a quarter, heads or tails, for first chance, but Bill wouldn't hear of it. He said it wasn't chivalrous. He had been reading a lot about the old knights and their lady-loves, in the spare minutes between Jack's chores and his own, and he said "Mirandy can give points to any of them girls they made so much fuss about in the old days, and beat them, hands down, and it ain't fair to her if we let ourselves be laid over by any knight that ever wore an iron pot."

And Jack gave in. But it bothered them what to do. You see, there's no dragons, nor giants, nor enchanted castles nowadays, and King Arthur himself couldn't earn his salt at the knight business. But after much studying they got hold of a scheme. The wolves had been mighty bad in our county for the last year or two. You couldn't keep a sheep, and the way they gathered in the chickens and ducks was a terror. It may have been because Bill heard Mirandy saying that her last turkey-hen had disappeared the night before, but, anyway, they decided that for the next two months they would hunt wolves, and the man with the biggest pile of scalps should go in and win. From that on, you could hear the pop of a rifle most any time, day or night, and soon wolves got to be scarce as hen's teeth. They shot wolves, trapped wolves, poisoned wolves, and incidentally about half the dogs in the settlement. Bill found a den and dug up about eleven young ones, but Jack got back with two litters of five each and one old one.

Excitement again ran high. Old Mosey Pool bet his lame mare against Joe Willow's brindle ox on Jack. The boys said nothing but kept popping away. They drove all through the county, and the wolves fairly had to take to the bush.

The two months wore through, somehow, and Jack brought his pile of scalps over to Bill's for the final count. It happened that about fifty of us dropped in, promiscuous like, on Bill that morning; so we saw the count. First we counted out Jack's pile. Old and young, there were just ninety-seven scalps, all told. I saw Bill turn

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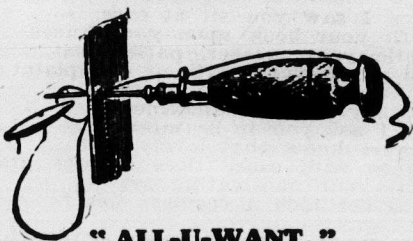
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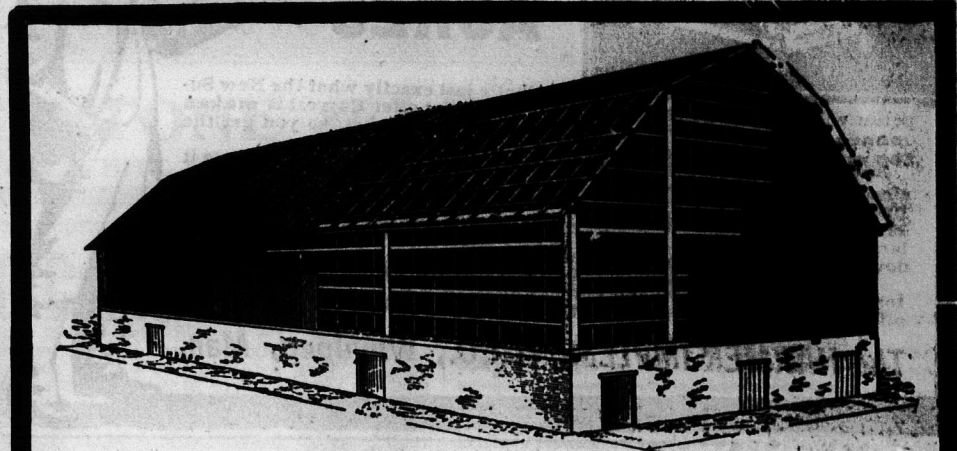
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