



TRUE education always must have the thought of God in it.

Winning the Wilderness

(Continued from last week.)

Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.
On his return from the Civil War, Asher Aydelot, the hero of the story, refuses to settle down on his father's farm and announces his intention of marrying Virginia Thaine, a southern girl and daughter of a bitter enemy of the Aydelots. His father disinherits him, but he marries Virginia and together they trek westward to the Kansas plains, where Asher and his cousin, Jim Shirley, have won success from the land. Many hardships are encountered.
Jim Shirley becomes dangerously ill and Virginia is the only person to go to Carey's Crossing for the plain's doctor, but Dr. Carey comes to her rescue. He is surprised to learn that she is Virginia Thaine, whom he knew and loved in the South.
The prairie yielded but slowly to its possessors, and after they had paid out-time, energy, hope and undying faith in its possibilities, a wrathful sun and a rainless sky wrought havoc to the hopped pastures of 1871. Barley Choppers, the real estate hawk, tries to get the settlers to sell their claims to him, but without avail.
On the night of a great winter blizzard the life of one of the Aydelot boys and for days Virginia lies at the point of death. Dr. Carey and Bo Peep, his colored servant, come to the rescue. Three years later, little Thaine is born and is the joy of his father and mother, and Mrs. Aydelot claims that the real romance of Grass River will be Thaine's, for he was born there.

Jim Shirley receives a letter from Alice Shirley, the wife of his brother Tank, who is a useless fellow, asking him to be guardian of her little girl Leigh, who since her mother's death has been with a friend, who proves to be Miss Jane Aydelot, into whose hands the Aydelot property fell when Asher was disinherited. Dr. Carey volunteers to go to Cloverdale for Leigh. Her coming to Grass River marks an epoch in the annals of the settlement, and she soon becomes the friend of everyone and a great companion for Thaine.

"I am hoping to have only thoroughbreds some day. That's a good horse you ride," Jacobs replied.

"Yes, he has a strain of Kentucky blue-blood. My wife owned a thoroughbred when we came West. We keep the decent still. We've never been without a big horse in the stable since that time. Do we turn here?"

"They were following the lower trail by the willows, when Jacobs turned abruptly to a rough roadway leading up a shadowy hollow."

"Yes. It's an ugly climb, but much shorter to the sheep range and the cattle are near."

"How much land have you here, Jacobs?" Asher asked.

"From Little Wolf to the corporation line of Wykerton. Five hundred acres, more or less, all fenced, too," Jacobs added. "This creek divides Wyker's ground from mine. All the rest is measured by links and chains. We agreed to metres and bounds for this because it averages the same, anyhow and I'd like a stream between Wyker and myself in addition to a barbed wire fence. It gives more space, at least."

They had followed the rough way

only a short distance when Asher, who was nearest the creek, halted. The bank was steep and several feet above the water.

"Does anybody else keep sheep around here?" he inquired.

"Not here," John Jacobs answered. "Look over there, isn't that a sheep?"

Asher pointed to a carcass lying out of the water on a pile of drift where the stream was narrow, but too deep for fording.

"Maybe some dog killed it and the carcass got into the creek. My sheep can't get to the water because my pasture is fenced. That's on Wyker's side, anyhow. I won't risk fording it, get over there. It's as dead risk now as it will ever be," Jacobs asserted.

Their trail grew narrower and more secluded, winding up a steep hill between high banks. Half way up, where the road made a sharp turn, a break in the side next to the creek opened a rough way down to the water. As they passed this, a woman coming down the hill caught sight of the two horsemen around the bend

and made a swift movement toward this opening in the bank, as if to clamber down from their slight. She was not quick enough, however, when she found she had been seen men had passed on.

Asher, who was next to her, looked keenly at her as he bade her good morning, but John Jacobs merely lifted his hat without giving her more than a glance.

The woman stared at both, but made no response to their greetings. She was plainly dressed, with a black scarf tied over her low-colored hair. She had a short club in one hand and a big battered tin can in the other. When she seemed anxious to conceal after them with an ugly expression of malice in her little pale gray eyes.

"That's a bad face," Asher said, when they were out of her hearing. "I wonder why she tried to hide that old salt's eye."

"How do you know it was a salt?" Jacobs asked.

"Because it is exactly like a salt can I saw at Pryor Gaiques' old cabin, and because some salt fell out as she tipped it over," Asher replied.

"You have an eye for details," Jacobs returned. "That was Gretchenried his bartender, and is raising a family of little bartenders back in the hilly country there, while Jimpe helps Hans run a perfectly respectable tavern in town."

"Well, I may misjudge her, but if I had any interest near here, I should want her to keep on her own side of the creek," Asher declared.

And somehow both remembered the dead sheep down in the deep pool at the foot of the hill.

The live sheep were crowding along the creek on the side of the big range when the two men entered it.

"What ails the flock?" Asher asked, as they saw it following the fence line eagerly.

"Let's ride across and meet them," Jacobs suggested.

The creek side was rough with many little dips and draws having the rods quietly line in places. The men started quietly toward the flock by the shortest way, as they faced a hollow deepening to a draw toward the creek Asher suddenly halted.

"Look at that!" he cried, pointing toward the fence.

John Jacobs looked and saw where the ground was lowest that the barbed wires had been dragged out of place, or more sheep to crowd through at a time. As they neared this point, Asher said:

"It's a pretty clear case, Jacobs. See that line of salt running up the bare ground, and here is an opening. The flock is coming down on that line. They will have a chance to drink after taking their salt."

John Jacobs slid from his horse, and giving the rein to Asher, he climbed through the hole in the fence and hastily examined the ground beyond it.

"It's a friendly act on somebody's part," he said grimly. "The creek cuts a deep ale under the bank here. There's a pile of salt right at the edge. Somebody has sprinkled a line of it clear over the hill to toll the flock out where they will scramble for it and tumble over into that deep water. All they need to do is to swim down to the next shallow place and wade out. The pool may be full of them now, waiting their turn to go. Sheep are polite in deep water; they never rush ahead."

"They swim well, too, especially if they happen to fall into the water just before shoring time when their wool is long," Asher said ironically. "What did you say Gretchen Gimpe had in that tin can?" Jacobs inquired blandly.

"Oil of sassafras, I think," Asher responded, as he tied the horse and helped to mend the weakened fence.

"Nobody prospers long after such tricks. I'll not spend the day over lost sheep," John Jacobs declared. "Let's hunt up the cattle and forget this, and the woman and the scary little twist in the creek trail."

"Why scary?" Asher asked. "Are you so afraid of women? No wonder you are a bachelor."

Jacobs did not smile as he said: "Once when I was a child I read a story of a man being killed at just time I go up that crooked, lonesome hill road. I remember the picture in the book. It always makes me think of that story."

When the fence was made secure the two rode away to look after the cattle. And if a Shadow rode beside them, it was mercifully unseen, and in nowise dimming to the clear light of the spring day.

It was high noon when they reached Wykerton, where Hans Wyker still fed the travelling public, although the flourishing hotel where Virginia Aydelot first met John Jacobs had disappeared. The eating-place behind the general store room was divided into two parts, a blind partition wall cutting off a narrow section across the farther end. Ordinary diners went through the store into the dining room and were supplied from the long kitchen running parallel with this room.

There were some guests, however, who entered the farther room by a rear door and were likewise supplied from the kitchen on the side. But as there was no opening between the two rooms, many who ate at Wyker's never knew of the narrow room beyond their own eating-place and of the two entrances into the kitchen covering the side of each room. Of course the prime reason for such an arrangement lay in Wyker's willingness to evade the law and supply customers with contraband drinks. But the infraction of one law is a breach in the wall through which many lawless elements

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