

**Sar' Ann.**

By HARRY M. MOORE.  
(Red and Gun in Canada)

Draw up to the fire, comrades, and I'll tell you about Sar' Ann—You smile, but you're wrong—Sar' Ann was not a woman, although perhaps no woman ever got so close to the souls of men as did this bewitching contrivance to take life.

Sar' Ann was a rifle! Not a toy gun to be fondled by watery blooded, arm-chair, pseudo followers of the Red Gods, not a chattel to gather dust and rust and to be handed down in writing from generation to generation; not a meaningless object piled away under an aged-old accumulation of rubbish up in the attic somewhere. Sar' Ann was a rifle, a real, honest-to-goodness, dependable weapon, guaranteed to destroy absolutely anything that ever dared stand up before it.

Angus Delauche christened that rifle Sar' Ann.

Twenty years ago the backwoodsman, Angus Delauche, carefully picked Sar' Ann out of a hardware store window in an upper country village. Angus Delauche's small black eyes glowed with surprise and anticipation. The handsomely modeled walnut stock with a strip of white pearl in the side, the pistol grip, the hair trigger, the sights, the light forged steel barrel, the magazine—all, all were striking evidences of the advance of the times. Here was the latest in rifles.

Delauche raised the rifle to his shoulder and ran his eye along the sights. He pressed down the lever and snapped it up again. His trigger finger tightened firmly. The muzzle of the rifle swung down slowly. Angus Delauche grinned.

"Some gun!" he chortled to the clerk at his elbow. "How much money?"

"Ninety-five dollars," the clerk returned readily, and he added, "We will throw in a hundred rounds of ammunition."

Angus Delauche soberly stood the rifle up against the window while his thick, gnarled fingers pushed through his heavy, untrimmed brown beard.

"To much," he said.

But the clerk was not to be put off. Here was a good prospect. The clerk's soft, white hand dropped gently on Angus Delauche's shoulder and remained there while he got this off his chest:

"Angus, old timer, don't let this bargain slip away from you. If I could shoot as you can, this rifle would not be for sale for any amount of money. It is absolutely the last word in a rifle, as you can see for yourself. It was brought into this country by a tourist who accidentally shot himself up in the bush somewhere. As near as we can learn the man had this rifle fashioned to order for his wife at some factory across the line—" he picked the gun up and pointed to the strip of pearl in the stock—"See, there's his wife's initials. Now, look, Angus—this is a high power rifle with a point blank range of five hundred yards." See the shells are of the new type, bottle neck, loaded with smokeless powder—"

Angus Delauche perked up his head. "Smokeless powder, did you say? SMOKELESS powder? Never heard of such a thing—you mean to tell me there is no smoke—"

"There is no smoke, Angus."

Angus Delauche lifted the rifle to his arm again and studied the stock. "And what do you say them initials stand for?" he asked.

The clerk shook his head. "His wife's name, I suppose. Maybe Susan Ann, maybe—"

Angus Delauche jerked up. "Sar' Ann, by gosh, maybe, eh?"

That same afternoon with Sar' Ann under his arm, Angus Delauche was on his beaming way up country. And with the change of location from the hardware store window to the solitude of the big white pine and the

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moose, Sar' Ann began to make history.

In one year the keen point of Angus Delauche's hunting knife had made thirty-seven downward strokes on the left side of the understock. Every stroke indicated a deer. In one year the keen point of Angus Delauche's hunting knife pitted twenty-two holes on the right side of the understock. Fourteen of those pits indicated the deaths of fourteen moose, the remaining eight were Sar' Ann's tally for a like number of bear. Some killer, eh? Yep!

And what is more, in one year Sar' Ann's reputation had drawn the settlers from all parts of the country to Angus Delauche's cabin and there wasn't one of Angus Delauche's visitors who would not have given him one hundred per cent. on his investment or a year of his life to possess Sar' Ann. For Sar' Ann had taken on a distinct personality. Sar' Ann was not a wood and steel contrivance to speed a steel jacketed bullet on its death mission. No! Sar' Ann was a living entity. Such is fame, ut!

One morning while Angus Delauche and his wife were over in a back field planting a few potatoes, their only son—a ruddy, rugged inquisitive little chap of twelve, made bold to get thoroughly acquainted with that thing that threatened the peacefulness of the housewives of the district.

Gluing his eye to the muzzle, the lad's bare toe pressed that sensitive trigger. Sar' Ann belched fire and lead. The Recording Angel up above made a new entry in his voluminous Book of Arrivals. And Sar' Ann—Sar' Ann, the cause of the Recording Angel's new entry was as cold and clammy to the touch as that of the child who lay beside it.

After the funeral Angus Delauche hung Sar' Ann on two long spikes over the door, and for days fought it

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below. But! Angus Delauche's battle with himself was needless. He was saved all pangs of vengeance in punishing his pet.

Pete Lahey stole Sar' Ann!

Pete Lahey believed that if you can't buy a thing you want that the law was broad enough to cover the other recourse, that of stealing. So Pete stole Sar' Ann.

Turned down time and time again when he broached Sar' Ann's purchase, Pete shadowed the Delauche place. One day when Angus and his wife were over in back field hoeing the potatoes that they had planted when Sar' Ann bereaved them, Pete Lahey vaulted the old snake fence. And when Pete Lahey returned to the shadows of the pines Sar' Ann's muzzle protruded six inches below the left side of his coat. An hour later Angus Delauche discovered that Sar' Ann was missing from above the door, and because he had quarrelled with his rifle, he was pleased that it was gone.

But Pete Lahey's possession of Sar' Ann was not of very long duration. Pete would trade his soul for a bottle of red eye. Bull Heffernon furnished the bottle, Pete kept his caloused soul, but passed Sar' Ann over to Bull Heffernon and the height of land.

There is no telling the pleasures that Bull Heffernon might have enjoyed in Sar' Ann's possession had he kept away from Cassidy's.

Like Pete Lahey, Bull Heffernon had an insatiable thirst for the liquid that kicks, and as Cassidy's Stopping Place at the Basin Depot was the nearest oasis in the vast territory Bull maligned by calling it a privy of himself. Bull made straight for Cassidy's.

Perhaps Bull Heffernon was so enraptured by the possession of this wonder gun that he had suffered a lapse of memory; he should have

known that the moment he stepped inside Cassidy's door he was as close to the scalped and the fuming fluid, I say Bull Heffernon should have remembered that he had rolled a shantymen in the past and Cassidy had caught him all Bull must have been so completely tickled by having the famed Sar' Ann under his arm that he was not of thinking back. A big black barrelled from back of the bar, snatching to pieces on the way above his head was Bull Heffernon's first reminder that he had been some time in the remote past he ever dared put a foot in Cassidy's again he would never leave the alive.

Bull Heffernon jumped to as another bottle came his way eyes blazed like live coals of fire row of men aligned against the divided and crowded back to the on either side. Cassidy, black rage, was slowly raising a long barrelled pistol to the bar. But Cassidy was too slow. The eye of Sar' Ann leveled, there was a gleam of an eye along the top of Sar' Ann spoke. Cassidy there to his chest and tumbled down from view.

The rows of men along the broke to go to Cassidy's assistance but huddled back to their places again. Bull Heffernon was jerking a few short sentences:

"Stay where you are! Cassidy what he has been looking for was Sar' Ann speaks, something to go down your throat and what I want me at the Iron Mine Gallies I won't give up without a fight so come prepared. Haven't I handy to mark up Sar' Ann's score. Will use my teeth and he raised Sar' Ann to his mouth he bit into the stock. Then backing of the door he reminded them of

"When Sar' Ann speaks, someone has got to drop. Good-night!" kicked the door shut with his toe. Bull Heffernon knew better than permit himself to be surrounded by shack in Iron Mine Gully. The Indian blood in Bull Heffernon's the Indian's fighting ground in the open.

(To be continued.)

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