

On Friday, April 1, 1892, Negus came to Laramie City, from Cheyenne. He was all excited. He had learned (as much as could be learned at the time) the plots of the cattlemen and their paid killers under the command of Major Wolcott and Captains or Lieutenants, Frank Canton and Tom Smith.

"Billie," said Charles, "they'll leave Cheyenne within the next few days. They are bound for Johnson County and Buffalo. They intend to wipe out the small ranchers and homesteaders and turn the country back into an unbroken stock preserve. I learned the names of a score or more whom they are planning to slay. Among them are -----, -----, and -----, old friends of yours. What are you going to do about it? They would drop everything and come to your assistance. Will you sit tamely here and allow they and their families to be wiped out? In addition to these ranchers, Red Angus, Jack Flagg and Colonel Kimball are among those slated for execution. These are also friends of yours; Kimball even comes from your own home town, Audubon, Iowa." This was true. Kimball had edited a paper at Audubon until some years previous, when he had sold out, come west, purchased and was editing a paper at Douglas. Continued Charlie, "Will you come with me to warn and assist them?"

For a moment I considered. Here were half a dozen men, well-known to me; most of them loved, all admired. I could not, in honor, remain away. At the time I had no steady employment. A few days, or weeks, would never be missed. I was young, not yet twenty one. I loved the northern country, knew and admired the brave men who were trying to make homes there. I knew, also, what they were up against, as I, too, had mingled with the masses and knew what the enmity of the cattle barons meant to them. My hesitation was brief. "We start tomorrow!" I answered.

That afternoon we made all preparations. I had several horses handy. A saddle was secured for Solon, and such supplies, in addition to those, I had in my bachelor quarters. We might need those while riding through the hills. They could be added to at Douglas and again at Casper.

My guns, a 40-82 Winchester, Model of 1886, and two long-barreled, double action, Frontier Model, Smith & Wesson Revolvers, were with me. Another rifle, a 40-60 Marlin was wrapped in a roll of bedding and awaiting me at the old "30 Mile Ranch," just a few miles to the west of Laramie Peak and along the road we would follow. The ranch was also called The Bar M. I would get the gun from there for Charles. One of the six-shooters I would turn over to him, also. We filled our belts with 44-40 cartridges; this for the revolvers. I filled an extra belt with 40-82 shells as did Charles with 40-60 shells for the Marlin, to be picked up at the "30 Mile." Everything was secured and in readiness, so we chatted with friends met on the streets of the city, and then, at supper time, sought my room in the Collins Block, above and back of the Davis and Miller Furniture and Second Hand Store on Second Street, prepared and ate supper, and then read and played cribbage until bedtime.

Sunday morning, April 2, we set out. The road ran northwestward, which followed the Union Pacific Railroad to Rock Creek. From Rock Creek, the road lead northward, and at times a trifle east of north.. This we followed over the trail where I had formerly carried the mail at times. Through the Laramie Hills it led, passing to the west of Laramie Peak and on by the old "Forty Mile Ranch," (the "Mountain Home" of territorial myth and legend) thence through the upper portion of the Great LaBonte Canon and Downie Park, on past "Point of Rocks," across "Windy Ridge," and then down into the Valley of The LaPrelle and on passing to the west of "Moss Agate Hill," down the winding road and into Douglas.

Our first night was spent some seven miles north of Rock Creek at what was known as the "Seven Mile Springs." Here, wearied with our journey of around fifty miles, we halted for the night, watered, fed and hobbled our horses and prepared for supper.

We had brought with us from Laramie City the needed supplies: oats for the horses, flour, baking powder, coffee, salt, pepper, bacon, sugar, a small frying pan, coffee pot, tin plates, tin cups, knives, forks and spoons. These, rolled in extra blankets, we carried behind our saddles. Along with them was the ever-present "slicker." Little was the weight, and packed as we carried them, they were neither bulky nor inconvenient. Neither of us, at the time, used tobacco in any form, so a single box of matches, in addition to those in our pockets, fully satisfied us.

Just before camping, Charlie, to his great delight, and not being a great shot, secured a young antelope buck. This we dressed, and reserving the "saddle" for our next day's journey, contented ourselves with the heart, liver, kidneys and front quarters for cooking before the blazing campfire. The meat fried while the shoulders were roasting. We mixed together flour, salt, baking powder and water and stirred it together in the form of dough. Charlie was very handy at this. We baked it in our frying pan, a sort of "frying pan bread." While this was baking, coffee was boiled and then we had a hearty supper. After supper dishes were washed (two cups, two tin plates and a knife, fork and spoon for each), we prepared for the night.

On the ground, we spread, first of all, our saddle blankets. These full-width, double, woolen blankets, new and strong, kept from us the cold and chill of the earth. It was none too warm at this time of spring. Over this, we spread the double blankets we each carried behind the saddle, then, with coats for pillows and with rifle beside us and six-shooters beneath our heads, we lay down, feet to the fire, to talk and visit until sleepy. From time to time one or the other would arise and replenish the fire, using for fuel buffalo chips or sage brush, each being

plentiful. Soon, tired out from our long ride, we dropped off to sleep, and thanks to strong constitutions, good health and clear consciences, slept like the young animals we were.

At 4:00 we were up and about. While coffee was boiling and bread baking, the horses were brought in and given a feed of oats. Then, on flap-jacks, roasted antelope shoulder and boiling coffee, we made a hearty breakfast. By sun-up we were on the road.

Some thirteen or fourteen miles along, we passed, some few rods off the main road, the ruins of the "Twenty Mile Ranch." This, abandoned some years before by Niel Mathison, alias "Billy McCloud," was entirely deserted, merely the ruins of a one-time stage station remaining. A couple of miles further on and the ruins of the old "Twenty Two Mile" with merely a stone chimney standing, was passed and the next point of interest to us was the "Thirty Mile" which we reached an hour or more later.

Slightly off the road, eastward toward Laramie Peak, was situated the old Thirty Mile Ranch, fully as often called the Bar M. Here we found no one at home, but stored as I had left it, we found my bed roll. My box, or truck of books, had been opened and the books were scattered about the bunk house, resting where read by the boys and tossed carelessly aside.

In my bed roll, still intact, we found the Marlin exactly as I had left it, months before. This we carefully fitted together, wiped out and loaded. Then Charlie slipped it into the saddle scabbard attached to the saddle horn and back cinch ring, below stirrup leather on the left hand side of the saddle.

Writing a few lines to our old friend, Johnny Rogers, Bar M. foreman, we left the message lying on the table and resumed our journey. This message, Rogers never received. It was blown away, or in some unknown manner, destroyed.

At midday we halted for lunch. Midway through the great LaBonte Canon was where we stopped. In a clump of yellow pine trees right beside the road,*we built our camp fire of pitch pine knots. "Spider bread," boiled coffee and antelope ham made a dinner that appealed to hungry men, having tasted no food since early daylight.

Before entering the canon, we had passed the deserted "Forty Mile," the "Mountain Home Ranch" of frontier myth and legend. This ranch, some years previous was known to some as "The Burbank Horse Ranch," and was one in which Judge Dundy, of Omaha, was interested. Dundy laid himself liable to criticism when he remained in his office after hours to lend his aid in disposing of Jones and Walker, witnesses against the stockmen in the burning of the K. C. Ranch and the murder of Nate Champion and Nick Ray. The fact that he, himself, was or had been, a Wyoming stockman may have had something to do with his willingness to so "put himself out." Whether so, the fact remains that Dundy and Frank, Judge and Clerk were, for years, interested in the Forty Mile Ranch. Every summer, for years, they spent their vacation here. Many times have I seen them, and to my own knowledge, known of their killing deer, elk, antelope and mountain sheep by the dozens, and then leaving them lying, at times not even removing hide or tongue. At one time they slaughtered, in the LaBonte Canon, seven bear. One of these, a young cub, thanks to the judge's kindness, I packed to the ranch where we ate it as we would fresh pork. This happened in the summer of 1889.

After dinner, while the horses grazed along the rushing LaBonte, Charlie and I talked things over. We discussed the future and wondered how things would turn out when the invaders came in contact with real law, as enforced by real officers of the Sheriff Angus type. "Billie," said Charles, "we must be there to see and help them!" "Sure!" said I, "and it is time we were starting!" We arose to our feet, saddled and packed our horses and headed on through the canon and out into Downie Park.

Douglas was almost fifty miles away, and we planned on making it if our horses could hold out. We left the LaBonte about 1:00 p. m. and it was about ten miles to Point of Rocks and Windy Ridge. Some two or more miles before reaching these points, we passed the Downie and Jackson ranches. Jackson, at this time, was the only settler living in Downie Park. Downie had been spending most of his time elsewhere for the past few years. It was known as Buffalo Park at the time my kinsman, Wesley Moulton, wooed and won his Indian bride, Helen Wilson, otherwise known as LIGHT-IN-DARKNESS. She was the daughter of the Scotch trader, Levi Wilson and a half-breed Pawnee woman, his wife.

At Jackson's ranch, we stopped and chatted a few moments with this great-hearted old Dane and his young wife, Cora Jackson. She was the sister of John Yiesley, a trusted stage employee at Buffalo. She was also, I honestly believe, a sister of the "Biscuit Shooter," immortalized in Owen Wister's novel "Lin McLain." Lin, too, I believe, to be drawn from life, the character that of Phil Hoosier, son of an elderly Frenchman, a retired army man, a settler and homesteader on the LaPrelle. His French name was almost unpronounceable and he and his family were called Hoosier. It was nearest to the original that the public could twist their tongues about.

Jackson, a small rancher himself, and in sympathy with the small ranchers, heard our news and urged us to hasten on to Buffalo to warn John and others.

By mid-afternoon, we had passed Moss Agate Hill and were heading onward toward Douglas, some twenty odd miles away. Late that night we reached this city and put our horses in the barn of O. P. Witte, an old time friend and liveryman. Within a short time it was figured out that he was the cattlemen's agent and assistant in getting out of the country the witnesses to the burning of the K. C., and the murder of Champion and Ray. We went up town, entered a short-order house, ordered and ate a hearty supper. Returning, we unrolled our blankets in a vacant stall and slept soundly until morning.

Fortunately for us, Witte was busy and I had no time to talk and visit with him. Otherwise, being an old friend, I would probably have "let the cat out of the bag" by telling him our plans. Luckily for us, as he was probably planning for the proposed invasion, he had merely time to speak to and welcome us. Had we told our plans, likely, he would have had us waylaid and taken care of in the manner of Jones and Walker.

Being tired and worn out, we slept late the next morning. After breakfast we sought out Colonel Kimball, and Solon told him all he had discovered. This was not real news to Kimball. The invasion was looked for. Articles in the eastern and other large papers and the recent copies of Cheyenne and Denver dailies had, in a manner, forewarned him and others of what was to happen. He, however, was pleased to learn of our interest and he urged to to hasten on to Buffalo to apprise Jack Flagg and Sheriff Angus of what was being done by the cattlemen.

There was so much to do at Douglas, so many old friends to meet and visit, we were late in starting on our journey to Casper. First we replenished our supplies, including oats for the horses. Then, at Colonel Kimball's suggestion, we added a few more boxes of shells to our "arsenal." We took dinner with the Colonel, at his request. Then after taking farewell of him and other friends, we headed up the Platte toward Casper.

That night, Monday, April 14, we camped along the Platte near the base of the great rise, where, at this time, still stood the ruins of Ft. Fetterman. We had left Douglas late in the afternoon. Our reasons for camping here, were many. It was a favorite spot of mine. Always interested in frontier history, I never, willingly, went by a fort, or the ruins of a fort, without pausing to look it over. Many times I had passed Ft. Fetterman, but never, as yet, had I taken time to climb the hill and survey the famous spot, close at hand. Also, it was drawing toward evening, and the wood and water here were plentiful, and along the river, almost at camping place, I spotted a small band of prong-horn antelope.

Leaving Charlie to watch the horses, I slipped up on the bunch and at the crack of my 40-82 a yearling buck leaped a few feet, and then, as is the habit of a mortally-wounded animal of this species, began grazing. After a few bites he fell dead. Cutting his throat we cut off, skin and all, the saddle. Then riding on until we reached a suitable camping place, we went into camp for the night.

While I watered, fed and hobbled the horses, Charlie fried antelope ham and made coffee. With these, and cheese and crackers purchased at Douglas, we made a hearty meal. After eating this early supper, we climbed the hill, and for an hour or more looked over the old fort. Returning to camp, we chatted for a time, again ate antelope ham, cheese and crackers. We also drank strong coffee made more palatable by the addition of condensed milk purchased with other supplies at Douglas. We then retired early.

We were very tired. For months we had scarcely touched the saddle. Our three day's ride, though covering little over one hundred and fifty miles, had left us worn and saddle weary. Charlie, in particular, was badly chafed. He rubbed his legs with melted antelope tallow and cursed like a trooper.

Up again early in the morning, we headed on toward Casper. We were traveling slowly. Our horses were tired, in spite of their pat rations and hay at settled stations. At noon we camped beside a teamster, a freighter, and with plenty of hay he allowed our horses to "help themselves," roundly cursing us for trying to pay for the favor. This man, whose name I will not mention, figured prominently in the attack on the T. A. Ranch and was, and if alive, is still hated and feared by the cattle association. He was deeply interested in our story of the planned invasion. He figured on reaching Casper by noon of next day. Here, he would turn the outfit over to his brother and would hasten on north to Buffalo to join forces

with his old friend and companion, Red Angus, Sheriff of Johnson County. His last words as we pulled out, were, "Boys, tell that red-headed old Scotch hellion that Jim ----- is coming and for him to have a deputy's star and commission ready."

That night, reaching Casper, we stabled our horses, ate supper, and after receiving permission, unrolled our blankets in an empty stall and slept soundly until morning.

END OF PART FOURTH

NOTES.

(At close of story.)