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TEA

Riders for the *Hoot-Owl Pool*

by G. H. SHARP

CHAPTER THREE

(Continued From Last Week)

"She's afraid they'll kill him. Some cowboy told her that while Webb was in jail, somebody tore his fence down and ruined his hay crop. They ran off his horses, but Tex or somebody picked them up again and held them for Webb. There's all sorts of talk going round in Rimrock about a range war down yonder. Mae thinks a lot of Webb. I think she cares as much for him as she did for Bob Anderson, maybe more. It takes a woman to see things like that in another woman. And a blind man can tell that Webb worships her. Hank, don't let them kill Webb Winters."

"I won't, Ma, if I can help it. But Webb has made some almighty bad enemies and I can't ride herd on him night and day. I'm goin' down to look things over. I got an idea that might work out. Now don't you worry about me. I'm as safe as a preacher in church!"

But when he rode away into the crisp early morning, that worried frown again gathered between his eyes. He had been hearing all sorts of rumors from the range. One rumor that was repeated over and over was that Webb Winters and Tex were working the range with a crew of tough cowboys from the badlands, and that they were all carrying saddle guns. They were working from before daylight until after dark, gathering beef, branding what mavericks they could find, riding hard, and no reps from other outfits were even allowed to stop for a meal.

They had set three Triangle men afoot, taking their guns, unsaddling their horses and turning the animals loose. They had warned the three men that if they ever sighted them off the Triangle range again, they'd smoke them up. The three cowpunchers, carrying their saddles, had been forced to walk the 20 miles to the Triangle ranch.

Joe Blake and several other members of the Scissor-Bill Pool had riden up about noon time at the round-up camp. Tex told them to keep on riding because this outfit didn't feed anybody but white men.

Tex and Webb called their outfit the Hoot-Owl Pool. They were riding top horses. Every man of them was a fast cowboy in any man's cow country. They were cleaning up the range of mavericks as they worked it. They were several jumps ahead of the Scissor-Bill Pool that worked the same range. It was claimed that they made night rides over on the Triangle range and gathered up more than a few mavericks that rightfully belonged to Ab Abbot.

Sheriff Hank Roberts had heard these and many other tales concerning the Hoot-Owl Pool, an outfit boldly named for the men who ride the hoot-owl outlaw trail. So it was that he rode with a worried mind and grim determination in his heart.

* * *

It was after sundown when he located the Hoot-Owl round-up camp on Box Elder Creek. He saw the beef herd grazing on the bed ground. The remuda was being coralled so that the cowboys could catch their night horses. Mess wagon and bed wagon were camped at the edge of the creek and the cook moved around his open fire with its Dutch ovens. They had no tents; beds were scattered around on the ground. It was Webb Winters who rode out to meet him.

"I'll have to tell you, Hank," he said quietly, "that you'll have to wait out here 'til after dark. It ain't that you're not welcome, understand, but some of the boys are a little law-shy."

"I reckon I savvy. We might go down in the coulee, Webb, and set a while. I got some things to ask you."

"I reckon I know about what they are. You've had a long ride for nothin'. I'm not in a talkin' humor. I'll tell you this much without bein' asked, however. We are breakin' no law when we work this range. You can't lay a hand on us for what we're doin'. The only thing you can tally up against us is that we're workin' this range cleaner and faster than it's ever been worked. The Scissor-Bill Pool is havin' big fits and little 'uns, but it ain't slowin' us down any. Ab Abbot's thieves rode over a few days back and walked home like sheepherders. We got both the Scissor-Bill and Triangle outfits out-foxed."

Hank Roberts kept eyeing Webb. Webb looked older, somehow. Lean, brown, with a week's growth of whiskers on his face. His bloodshot eyes showed his lack of sleep. And when he grinned, there was a hint of bitterness at the corners of his mouth.

"You've bit off an almighty big mouthful, Webb."

"If I can't chaw it, I won't spit it out, anyhow."

"You boys are takin' a high-handed attitude, son. Keep it up and hell's goin' to pop. I don't want a range war, and I'll do everything I can to stop it. Another thing that don't set so good on my stomach is that you've fetched in a bunch of gunmen from somewhere. You shore are doin' your best to make a fool out of me."

"That ain't the idea, Hank. These boys are just helpin' us work our range. They're not Sunday school boys, that's a fact, but they're not skunks like the Triangle pays fightin' wages to. These men of ours are workin' without pay. Tex and I haven't money enough to pay 'em 'til after we ship, mebby not then. They're ridin' their own horses, to boot."

More than one man at the Hoot-Owl camp must have felt more or less uneasy in the presence of the law. Several of the cowboys had quit camp and had bedded down for the night in some cut-coulee or in a spot where the brush was thick.

It made Hank Roberts feel uncomfortable. Tex and Webb were giving him a cordial enough welcome, though he knew that they would be glad to see him ride away. But he had not yet finished with Webb Winters. He hadn't turned up his hole card. He aimed to spend the night.

"Ketch me a night horse," he told Webb, as he ate supper by the light of the fire, "and I'll stand guard with yuh. It's been a long time since I sang to a beef herd."

The remuda had been taken out by the nighthawk, but there was an extra horse or two staked out for emergencies. In case some night horse broke loose, there would be an extra to take its place. Webb nodded and grinned.

"I'm on second guard, Sheriff. Glad to have an old-timer go on with me."

Webb shared his bed with the sheriff, out there under the stars. Hank Roberts did not miss the fact that four men, instead of the customary two, went on guard. Also one man stood guard at camp. The Hoot-Owl Pool was taking no chances of losing their herd or being surprised in camp.

At ten o'clock a cowboy shook Webb. "Guard time, Webb."

Webb and the sheriff rode out into the star-filled night to where the herd was bedded. Behind them rode two other men.

* * *

It was a crisp, still night with a frosty tang in the air. A half moon rode above the skyline. Stars were sparks of silver. There was the pleasant smell of sagebrush. Somewhere along the creek came the slap of a beaver's tail. And sounding clear in the night was the crunch of hooves, the faint creak of saddle leather, the musical tinkle of spurs.

(Continued Next Week)

4811 SIZES 12—20; 30—42

Anne Adams

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This pattern, easy to use, simple to sew, is tested for fit. Has complete illustrated instructions.

Send twenty-five cents (25c) in coins (stamps cannot be accepted) for this pattern. Print plainly size, name, address, style number.

Send your order to Box 1, 123 Eighteenth Street, New Toronto, Ont.

St. Peter's In Sugar — Pastry cook Pasquale Cotumaccio used 50 pounds of sugar and took 20 days to complete this model of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. The model, complete to the inscription on the top of the facade, was made to decorate the dining room of a Rome hotel.

CHRONICLES OF GINGER FARM

by Gwendoline P. Clarke

Last week was pretty hectic . . . all of us at Ginger Farm going full blast to get everything done that should be done—but, of course, we didn't quite manage it. Who does? However, we are through seeding —and since we have spent a small fortune on grass seed, we certainly hope it will grow. Not that we are looking for trouble, but rather counting our blessings these days because our wheat and alfalfa have wintered far better than we had dared to hope for.

During spring seeding, farmers are always afraid to waste a minute, working long hours to get the job done, but now the seasons have become sort of topsy-turvey it makes even more of a rush job than ever. In our case, Bob had so many urgent orders for trucking gravel that Partner helped with the drilling and running ditches—which he was hardly able to do—so, by the time we were through, there was one man and two horses with tired, lame feet. I don't know which was limping the most—Partner or the horses.

And I was busy with housecleaning—and, of course, it never fails—when I start housecleaning, the visitors begin to arrive. One niece came Friday night and then Daughter and a friend showed up later, and various friends also chose this week-end to visit us. But we were glad to have them—if they can put up with us, we can always give the welcome mat an extra shake and have it ready for them.

My present job is painting the upper and lower hall, and the stairs. It is a big job as there are 11 doors, all told, but the monotony is considerably relieved by the activities of the robin I have been telling you about. Mrs. Robin eventually got down to business and laid four eggs—and what a beautiful color they were. In due time, there were three ugly little robins. The fourth egg, Mrs. Robin evidently decided wasn't going to hatch, so, after breaking it with her beak, she took hold of it and banged it up and down in the nest. Whether she fed little bits of the shell to her babies I couldn't tell, but I rather think that is what happened. As Mother Robin brooded her young, Mr. Robin took over the responsibility of feeding his wife and family. It was evident Mrs. Robin did not trust his judgment entirely because every tid-bit he brought, she sampled it first before passing it on to her open-beaked family. About twice a day, she flew off and did her own hunting. One day when she was away, there was a terrific squawking going on and I ran to the door in a hurry, fearing the cat was out for a kill. But no—I found not a cat, but three starlings on the step with the robins flying angrily around and pecking at the starlings furiously. But the starlings took no notice—not until they saw me—then they took off in a hurry and did not return.

The baby robins have their eyes open now; are getting their wing feathers and don't look quite so ugly. They also take a lot of feeding so it keeps Mr. and Mrs. Robin busy most of the time supplying their hungry needs. When I was painting the window around their nest Mrs. Robin was not in the least disturbed—just sat there watching me. But any time Mr. Robin came over with a juicy worm in his beak and saw me anywhere around, away he would go, worm and all. Brave protector! Honestly, I don't know which has been my main occupation these last few days—painting or bird watching. But each has certainly helped with the other.

Our spring flowers are now out in full bloom, but the daffies are not as good as usual. But there will be lots of narcissi—and last year it was the other way around, so maybe even the daffodils are objecting to the cold, late spring. Or it may be that they need lifting and re-setting. I think it is about 12 years since they were touched, so no doubt it is a job that needs to be done—if I can get around to it.

Well, the Manitoba flood conditions seem to be almost beyond belief. It is nothing short of heartbreaking to hear and read of those poor, dear people being shunted around from one place to another, not knowing what lies ahead or whether they will ever again see the place they knew and loved as "home." And if they do, what a home it will be! This morning, Kate Aitken, who had visited the flood area over the week-end, spoke of one farmer having to put the gun to 150 head of cattle because there was no hope of their being rescued.

Thank Heaven there is one bright spot in the picture—the quick response of kind-hearted folk in other provinces to offer help. There seems to be so much graft and greed in the world, and yet, when the need arises, better impulses are quickened and inspired, and ordinary, everyday folk show they are as generous and kind-hearted as they ever were.

SALLY'S SALLIES

"You're much stronger, Honey, than Tom, Dick, and Henry were!"

ANNE HIRST
Your Family Counselor

"Dear Anne Hirst: Two years ago, I was to have married a man in his 40's. (I'm 15 years younger.)

Everything was ready for the ceremony. The night before, my fiance wrote me that the wedding was cancelled.

"Only now I have learned why.

"I asked his mother, with whom he lives. She told me that 'two women in the same house couldn't agree!'

"I could have got along fine with her. I know old people are lonely, and I liked her. I helped her move and sewed for her. . . . But of course I could not live with her now. I feel she was trying to get everything out of me that she could.

"Why didn't she give us a couple of rooms—or live with her married daughter for a while? I've been made the laughing stock of my family and friends. It has broken my heart. Even now it is still affecting my health.

"Shall I stick with this man till we can marry some day? I am so sick of waiting!

"I think a man of his age is old enough to know what to do. If he loved me as he said, he wouldn't have given in to his mother.

"I will surely appreciate your advice. ."

"WORRIED."

* You intimate that you are still * dating your former fiance. Your * first act, when he cancelled the * wedding, should have been to * stop seeing him at all.

* Deprived of your friendship, I * think he would have found some * way to marry you, even taking * a very small place where you * two could be alone.

* I hope you will stop seeing him * entirely.

* Then he will have the chance * to live completely without you, * and find out just how empty his * life is. If anything will stimu- * late the solution to this situation, * tion, such a shock will do it.

* You have kno this man for * nine long years. In that time, * I agree that his mother should * have accepted the fact that some- * day he would marry you, and * prepared herself for it. His last- * minute decision was cruel, and * unnecessary. No wonder you * have suffered humiliations and * grief.

* However, your family and * friends must have long since got * over the shock, if you have not.

* I urge you to make new friends * as quickly as you can, look up * your old ones, and make a * brand-new social life for your- * self. Join organizations, be active * in them, and fill your afternoons * and evenings with wholesome * activities. This will help you re- * gain your self assurance, and make * everybody realize that you are a * young woman of dignity — who * refuses to let such a blow get * her down.

* After two years, you should * not feel so bitter toward his * mother. Admit that she is selfish, * and let it go at that. Call on * your innate charity, and cleanse * your soul of this searing malady. * (As to the expenses you men- * tion, these are always borne by * the bride's family.)

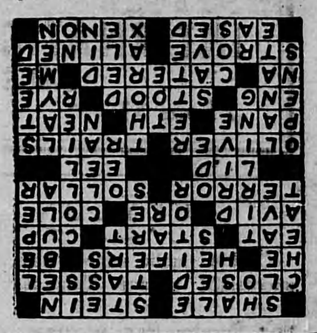
Learn the hazards that will confront your marriage before you take the step. Armed with that knowledge, you have won half the victory. Anne Hirst will help you. Write her at Box 1, 123 Eighteenth St., New Toronto, Ont.

LUCKY DOG

"I am afraid, doctor," said Mrs. Brown, "that my husband has some terrible mental affliction. Sometimes I talk to him for hours and then discover that he hasn't heard a word."

"That isn't an affliction, madam," was the weary reply, "that's a gift."

Upside down to prevent peeking.



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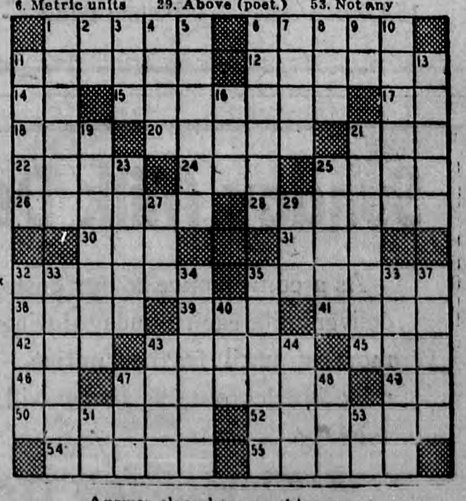
ISSUE 22 — 1950

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

ACROSS
1. Rock
6. Stone mug
11. Shut
12. Fringed ornament
14. Pronoun
15. Young cows
17. Exist
18. Devour
20. Set out
21. Sports prize
22. Eager
24. Unsmelted metal
25. Mother Goose king
26. Extreme fear
28. Platform in a mine
30. Cover
31. Fish
32. Boy's name
35. Paths
38. Window glass
39. Numeral suffix
41. Trim
42. British country (ab.)
43. Was situated
45. Cereal grass
46. Sodium (symb.)
47. Provided food
49. Pronoun
50. Endeavored
52. Fell into line
54. Relieved
55. Gas of the air

DOWN
1. Disentangle
2. Call to excite
3. Tough wood
4. Sediment
5. Newspaper employe
6. Metric units
7. Small pie
8. Reverse curve
9. Happens
10. Gas cloud
11. Imposture
13. Pariah
16. Distant
19. Turning rapidly (Scot.)
21. Miner
23. Propel
25. Spotless
27. Lyric poem
29. Above (poet.)
32. Begins
33. Woolly
34. Steeped
35. Chest
36. Laity
37. Horse
40. Pedal digit
43. Except
44. Take out
47. Romaine lettuce
48. Clamor
51. Sun god
53. Not any



Answer elsewhere on this page