

The Free Press Short Story

GUARDIAN OF THE RANGES

BY COE HAYNE

ON the counter at the back of the general merchandise store of Young, Hanover & Company sat Horace Young, junior member of the firm, his face a trifle pale after a trying ordeal, Duncan Saunders, lumberman and sawmill operator, had reserved his heaviest shot until the men he had brought with him into the store "to show Horace up" had passed out. Saunders considered it just as well that the community as a whole did not know everything at once. He intended to give Horace a bit of inside information for his own good.

"The conversation of the nation's timber is a pretty story to put into children's schoolbooks, but I'm here to tell you that your hold-out policy is going to ruin this town. Timber cut and sawed into lumber means bread and butter on this part of the western slope, and do you forget that?"

"I'm not forgetting what apple bread and butter in this country," answered Horace crisply.

"You know what I mean!" warned Saunders. "Idle lumber camps and a closed sawmill mean no pay checks in Mander's Cove. Does that mean anything to Young, Hanover & Company?"

"I believe that you are trying to convince me that the lumber operations of Pendleton and Saunders are about over," said Horace. "I have not enough faith to believe that. As long as you can get standing timber, you will keep on cutting and sawing, much as it injures our country."

"We pay honest wages," flared Saunders. "While denuding the hills surrounding our valley. In time that operation will kill our country."

"I heard all about that earlier this evening," cut in Saunders sharply. "You have a tract of good standing timber and I've made my top offer for it. When the other tracts have been milled off, our company pulls out and you will be left with your timber on your hands. It won't be worth a dollar, as no logging outfit will want to organize for that slope."

"It's a fairly big tract," smiled Horace as though he still were far from being impressed by Saunders' arguments.

"I'll give you time to come around to a business frame of mind, but not a long time," offered Saunders, and walked out of the store.

"A business frame of mind," repeated Horace. "Mr. Hanover—"

"Call me Bart, same as your dad did," said Barton Hanover who was Horace's senior by less than a dozen years.

burned-over section for instance. That's a scar on the mountains that may never heal. You say that's the loggers' own work?"

"Yes. Pendleton and Saunders slaughtered everything and did not clean up their brush. The new growth had no chance. Two years ago a fire swept through that jungle like an express train. We all turned out, fought fire eight days, and saved the company the only tract it has left."

"They Saunders has something to thank you for," laughed McCrea.

"I volunteered with the rest of the bunch. Some of our citizens cannot see that the complete destruction of the forest growth means the permanent erasing of this section of the state. I hold the largest tract of virgin timber left standing. Adjoining my property are several other holdings owned by some of the men who were present last night. What we want from Saunders is a contract to cut ripe timber under national forest conditions, cleaning up the brush afterwards. But Saunders is an old-time timber butcher. You heard his talk last night."

"John Pendleton is a man of different caliber."

"So I understand. Why doesn't he come up to see his business here?"

"He is interested in many large business enterprises."

"Oh, yes," sighed Horace. "As long as dividends come in, Saunders is a good partner for Pendleton."

McCrea departed for his hotel and Horace for the general store where he found two men waiting for him. Mr. Hagstrom and Mr. Hawkins, long-time residents of Mander's Cove, told Horace that they had been sent to him as a committee representing nearly all the owners of standing timber between Mander's Cove and Blue Ridge National Forest.

"We got together last night after leaving this building and came to the agreement that you have the right view of the future of our local lumbering and farming industries," said Hagstrom.

"We want to stand with you in the fight to preserve the forests upon the watersheds."

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J. Cadesky OPTOMETRIST WILL VISIT ACTON ON Monday Sept. 14th. Anyone suffering from Eyestrain, Defective Vision or Headache should not miss the opportunity of consulting this eyesight specialist. Appointments may be made with Mr. A. T. Brown, Druggist. CONSULTATION FREE Office Hours: 9 a. m. till 4 p. m.

transcend, you can drop and cling. Watch yourself!"

The pilot fastened a rope to the right wing and showed Horace how to handle himself when he climbed out over the wing for the drop. The airplane roared over the village toward the mountains. Twice Horace leaned forward from his seat to point out the direction, but when McCrea had picked up the tramway then in use, he followed it unerringly. Visibly, he was perfect and McCrea called upon his twin motor for the last ounce of power available.

To Howard the earth seemed to float backward with tantalizing slowness considering the life and death character of the errand upon which he had embarked; yet the deafening roar of the motors assured him of a speed not obtained on the previous flight. With surprising suddenness the high timbered lands that had seemed so far away loomed close at hand. Anxiously he scanned the narrow winding ribbon that was the logging railroad, for a glimpse of the tramway cars.

That the cars had not jumped the track before they were sighted by the occupants of the airplane gave McCrea and Horace cause for unbounded joy. They could see the boy perched on a log on the leading car. Beneath them was a comparatively straight stretch of track and here McCrea planned to drop his passenger. He cut off his motor, banked and glided earthward. He shouted to Horace to get ready. The latter climbed out upon the right lower wing. He gripped the loop of rope that had been fastened to the wing for his use in making the drop; then he slid over the rear edge of the wing. Beneath him a log appeared stationary. He could almost touch it with his feet as he dangled in the air. He released his hold upon the rope, dropped and clung. He saw Royal Pendleton stand up and heard him yell.

Horace knew his immediate task was to not the brakes. He applied them evenly running from one car to another until he had every brake wheel turned down hard. At the top of a steep grade, just beyond the last cable station above Mander's Cove the runaway train came to a stop.

"Some ride, big boy!" called out Royal, the irresponsible.

"It would have been a ride if you had started down that last grade," said Horace, whose relief was beyond measure now that he could look into the laughing eyes of the boy who had not yet come to a full realization of the doom that had threatened him.

Two weeks later McCrea wrote to Horace:

I am released from John Pendleton's employ and am now in the forest service. My first job is to bring Pendleton to Mander's Cove to show him your country. All that he has written you doesn't begin to reveal his real feelings. Royal is his one and only interest in life. I half believe he is going to ask Saunders to retire or accept all your up-to-date notions about forestry as applied to private lumbering.

APPLE EXPORTS

The statement recently issued by the Fruit Branch of the Dominion Department of Agriculture provides an interesting reference to the fact that Canadian apples last year were exported to twenty-one foreign countries, the United Kingdom heads the list by taking 1,007, 518 barrels. Belgium last year took eight times the volume of 1929.

Among the other countries buying Canadian apples in quantity are the United States, Denmark, Holland, Newfoundland, France, South Africa, New Zealand, Germany, South Africa, Sweden, British West Indies, the Orient, Egypt, East Africa, Mediterranean, Africa, Fiji, Dutch East Indies, Cuba, India and Mexico.

It is interesting to note from the same statement that Canada imported 129,627 barrels of apples during the fiscal year just ended of which 690 came from Australia, 3,850 from New Zealand, and the balance from the United States. Just recently shipments of very attractive apples have made their appearance on the market from South Africa. It is particularly interesting to note in connection with the imports that Eastern Canada absorbs 71.7 per cent. of the total brought in.

BETTER BRAN FLAKES

Acton Fall Fair September 15-16, 1931

Special Prize List

Table with columns for prize number, description of the prize (e.g., Best High Stepping Horse, Best Single Turnout, etc.), and the prize amount. It is divided into sections: HORSE SPECIALS, CATTLE SPECIALS, SHEEP, HOG AND POULTRY SPECIALS, GRAIN, ROOT AND VEGETABLE SPECIALS, FRUIT SPECIALS, and DAIRY AND DOMESTIC HORSE SPECIALS.