



WHISPERING ROCK by JOHN LEBAR

EIGHTH INSTALMENT
 SYNOPSIS: Ruth Warren, who lived in the East is willed three-fourth interest in the "Dead Lantern" ranch in Arizona by her only brother who is reported to have met his death while on business in Mexico. Arriving in Arizona with her husband who has ailing lungs and their small child, they learn that the ranch is located 85 miles from the nearest railroad. Old Charley Thane, rancher and rural mail carrier agrees to take them to the "Dead Lantern" gate, 5 miles from the ranch house. As they trudge wearily through a gulch approaching the ranch house, a voice whispers "Go back! . . . Go back!" At the ranch house they are greeted suspiciously by the gaunt rancher partner, Snavely, and Indian Ann, a herculean woman of mixed negro and indian blood. Snavely is difficult to understand but regardless, Ruth takes up the task of trying to adjust their three lives to the ranch and its development. Kenneth, Ruth's husband, caught in chilling rain contracts pneumonia and passes away before a doctor arrives. Ruth tries to carry on.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

Ruth had backed to the door. As Snavely ceased speaking, he slowly settled into his chair; slowly the fingers of his right hand began to rub his forehead.
 "I'll take the money," breathed Ruth, and ran out of the room.
 She entered the adobe and stood for several minutes just inside the door, her hand on the crib against the wall. She trembled so that she could hardly stand. After a time, she stepped beyond to the bed beneath the window and seated herself, chin on palm, her eyes on the strip of far horizon seen through the doorway. Her face was white and the four fingers of the hand beneath her chin were pressed in a row against her lips. The sun had set; long shadows raced into the valley. Near the grindstone by the kitchen door David's small face determinedly explained something to Sugarfoot. With her eyes still on the skyline, she went to the doorway. Part of that great expanse of land belonged to her. The rolling pasture lands to the east might extend forever, for any sign of boundary. Behind her, she knew, the ranch extended to the mountain tops—acres and acres, grass, trees, canons, hills. . . Old Charley had spoken as though the Dead Lantern was a wonderful ranch—feed enough for two thousand

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head—forty thousand dollars a year. But suppose he was wrong, suppose even, that the ranch could be made to earn only a quarter of that—the very amount she had just agreed to take for her entire interest. What would she and David do when that money was gone? Then David would have to go to work. His inheritance could have been a fine cattle ranch, a wholesome life out of doors, a good education, and a reasonable number of opportunities afterward.
 Suppose she fought down her pride. Ruth could imagine how her stepmother would smile over such a letter. Pride. . . Ruth had always been proud; how high she had held her head that day she had left home to go to Kenneth. No, she could not beg to be taken back, but perhaps she could write a business letter to her father.
 For a long time Ruth stood in the doorway, her eyes following David as he played with Sugarfoot. Yes, she would write the letter; what was pride compared with that pudgy-checked little being? But, oh, that terrible man in the ranch house! Where was the strength to fight her fear?

Ann left the ranch house on the path which led to the barn. The giantess eyed Ruth curiously.
 "Hello, Ann." Ruth smiled undecidedly.
 The huge woman paused. "Mr. Snavely says to git out the buckboard—I'm goin' to take you-all over to Thane's place so's you kin go in with him to-morrow."

Ruth put out her hand as though begging for time. The hand trembled. Slowly she stood up. "N-no, Ann." The girl walked swiftly past her and entered the living room. "Mr. Snavely," she called.
 The door of Snavely's bedroom opened at once and he looked out.
 "I'm sorry, but I've changed my mind"—Ruth chilled as she spoke—"I don't want to go back on my word—I can't help it. The money you offered me wouldn't be enough. I must have a steady income—something I can depend on for years. Don't you see? I've just got to stay here and make this ranch pay. I'm writing East for capital. I—if you'd help, I'm sure—" She paused, then straightened and said clearly, "Mr. Snavely, this is all I have; it's all my son can ever have from me or his father. I've got to make it a big ranch. I'm going to stay!"
 Snavely did not move, nor did he make a sound; with pale eyes contracted to slits, he looked at the girl for a moment, then his head withdrew and the door closed softly.
 Breakfast the next morning was a silent affair. Snavely seemed wholly absorbed with his food, but there was a tenseness about his every movement.
 As she was leaving the room, Snavely looked up. "Any time you get enough of this here place an' want to take me up on that deal, jest say so."

She paused and tried to smile. "Thank you, I shall remember. But first I'm going to see what can be done with capital—I'm writing East this morning."
 "What if you don't git it?"
 "Well—perhaps then we can make some other arrangement. Mr. Snavely—if I am successful—I wonder—would you sell me your quarter interest? I'd like to know the value you set on it—"
 Snavely took three slow steps to



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the girl's side. "I told you yesterday," he said tensely, "that I didn't want no money."

Again the girl forced herself to smile. "All right; the ranch will need you badly, of course. If we do obtain capital, it will have to be spent by some one who understands what improvements should be made."

The man nodded, then said easily, "You goin' down to the box? I'll be ridin' that way—I can take your letter for you. To-day's the day the mail goes in."

"Thank you—but I haven't had a ride for weeks. I think David and I will go."

"You wont get there in time—with the boy. Thane'll be goin' past inside of an hour. Better let me have it."

Ruth hesitated. "Thank you," she smiled, "perhaps it would be best for you to take it—if it isn't out of your way. I'll get the letter. But please catch my horse for me; I think I'll take a ride anyway."

She hurried to the adobe, Snavely following. Her letter lay upon the table. For a moment she regarded it thoughtfully, but she picked it up and going to the door gave it to Snavely with another word of thanks.
 Ten minutes after he had ridden along the southern bank of the gulch, Ruth mounted her horse and followed. Tucked in her blouse was another letter to the Dempster Greys. This letter, which she had just written, was a duplicate of the one she had given Snavely.

She left David with Ann. She hoped she wouldn't meet Snavely but, if so, she could say that she had forgotten something in the first letter. Perhaps he would take her letter to the mail box; but he had seemed too eager. . . She knew that he would rather not secure capital for the ranch.

Ruth saw no sign of Snavely. Nor, when she reached the box, had Snavely been before her—there was nothing in the box but the tin can.
 She determined to wait for Old Charley. She waited nervously, for she was worrying about David. She had never left him before. . . She believed Ann would watch him carefully; but suppose she didn't? David could slip out of sight so easily. He might step on a snake; he might wonder what the fence around the old well concealed and find a way to crawl over.

Ruth tortured herself with such thoughts for half an hour more. Finally, after a long look around, she put the letter in the box, carefully placed the can on top as a signal to Old Charley to pick up the mail, and started back.
 Five minutes after she had disappeared Snavely rode out of the ravine three hundred yards north of the ranch road and galloped toward the mail box. He had just reached a brush-bordered gully, still some distance from the box, when Old Charley's car swooped over a hill on the main road and disappeared at the bottom. The car would be at the box very soon.

Snavely brought his horse to a sliding stop, forced it into the gully and dismounted.
 A forty-five barked from the gully and a splinter flew from the top of the mail box. At the next shot the can fell to the ground.
 Shortly after, Old Charley drove past, glancing at the bare top of the mail box. When he was quite gone Snavely rode leisurely out of the gully.

For three consecutive Saturdays Ruth and her son were waiting at the mail box when Old Charley arrived. She was by this time expecting an answer to her letter. And though no letter came, Old Charley always managed to have a magazine or two, which, together with the news paper for which Ruth had subscribed, made a welcome little bundle. The old man also saw that she received a small weekly devoted to Arizona cattle raisers.

But the most important part of these weekly meetings was the hour or so of conversation with the old man. For sixty years he had raised cattle in this part of the San Jorge Valley and he loved to "talk ranchin."
 Ruth progressed rapidly in her education from the aimless asking of questions to the brisk formation of plans. The talk often turned upon the building up of herds and ranch improvement. Old Charley seemed to know by instinct just what Ruth wanted to learn most. She learned that it is often possible to do much without capital; that one may even

increase the quality and number of one's cattle without spending huge sums or becoming too artistic with a branding iron. Old Charley praised the "fine feed along the foothills there" with a gesture which included the whole Dead Lantern ranch.
 These talks with the old man gave the girl new courage; she understood something of what she had to do; she saw her problem clearly. Old Charley had given her weapons with which to fight her battle; she was no longer quite so helpless.
 She had avoided Snavely and had not yet given him a hint of what she was learning. Later, she told herself, she would have suggestions to make; now she waited for the capital which did not come.

On the fifth Saturday since she had placed her letter in the box, Ruth and David were again waiting for Old Charley.
 It was a great day for David—had he not ridden the entire distance on a spirited horse of his own, old Sanchez? And he had a new pair of chaps which his mother had made from the brown canvas of an old army cot. And last week mother had ordered some things which Uncle Charley was to get in town. The most important of these things was a small cowboy hat.

The eyes of both mother and son were anxiously focused far to the northeast, where a strip of brown road stood out on a small dun-colored hill. For Ruth, this was the last day of grace; a letter could have traveled twice to Philadelphia and back since that morning at the mail box.
 Ten minutes after the car came over the hill, it appeared again a hundred yards down the road and the horn gave its customary wheeze of salutation.



A forty-five barked from the gully and a splinter flew from the top of the mail box.

Ruth saw that Old Charley had a passenger—it must be his son, Will; she remembered that he was expected this week. A single glance told her that Will Thane was the first civilized person she had seen since leaving the East. It seemed years since she had seen a man in a tailored business suit, white shirt, an actual collar and tie. As they were introduced, she saw that he smiled exactly like his father. The young man seemed a silent, observant sort—not so very young either—she put him down as being on the other side of thirty.
 "Any mail for—the Dead Lantern?" she asked Old Charley in a casual tone.
 "Nothing but the papers. But I got all the stuff you wanted." He smiled, beginning to take packages from the machine. One of these, a roundish box of cardboard, he gave to David. After one look inside, David carried the box reverently to a rock some distance away. There he seated himself, wrapped in a rosy nimbus of bliss, the hat covering his small knees. It even had a horsehair band!

(Continued Next Week)

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NEWS AND INFORMATION FOR THE BUSY FARMER

Conversation with those engaged in the great Agricultural industry inevitably drifts to the low prices received for farm products and the extreme economic difficulty of making things go on the farm under present conditions. The lot of the farmer today is not an easy one and the farmer is hopefully looking forward to the day when he will get some relief from the crushing burden of taxation and a better market for his products.
 Agriculture, including stock raising and horticulture, is the chief single industry of the Canadian people, employing (at least census in 1931) 28.7 per cent of the total gainfully occupied population and 33.9 per cent, or over one-third of the gainfully occupied males. In addition it provides the raw material for many Canadian manufacturers, and its products in raw or manufactured form constitute a very large percentage of Canadian exports.
 The average wages paid to farm helpers in Canada for the year 1932 again showed a considerable decrease as compared with the previous year. The cost of farm labour reached its highest point in 1920. In the next two years there was a rapid drop so that the average of yearly wages, including board for male help, in 1922 was nearly 28 per cent less than in 1920. From 1923 to 1929 no very wide fluctuation occurred. In 1930, 1931 and 1932 continuous marked reductions were registered in the average value of yearly wages and board, following the downward trend of the prices of farm produce.

Where or when corn was first cultivated, or from what wild plant it developed, is not definitely known. It is generally assumed that its cultivation started in Central America and spread North and South. It has never been found wild. The Incas of Peru are said to have built large storerooms for it to prevent famine in case of crop failure. It was grown as far North as the St. Lawrence Valley when the first explorers arrived there. When Columbus landed in the West Indies he was presented with a kind of bread made from a grain the natives called "Mahiz." From this word is derived the English word maize, under which name the plant is known in Europe.

Potato Yield
 The preliminary estimate of the total yield of potatoes in Canada this year is 40,260,000 cwt. from 520,800 acres, or 77 cwt. per acre as compared with 76 cwt. per acre in 1932 and 83 cwt. per acre, the average for the five years 1927-1931. Ontario's yield is the lowest since 1916, being only 52 cwt. per acre as compared with 61 cwt. per acre last year. This was largely due to the drought which prevailed during the summer months, particularly in Southern and Western Ontario.
International Plowing Match
 The International Plowing Match staged in Derby Township, Grey County, near the City of Owen Sound, was successful from every standpoint, according to the Managing-Director, J. Lockie Wilson. Thousands of interested spectators attended from all parts of the Province. Five hundred and five contestants entered the various classes. The Inter-County Competition attracted special attention, Halton County carrying off the Farm Trophy for the Team prize. The majority of important manufacturers of farm implements demonstrated modern equipment. The Horse Show open to plow teams was very keen, and thirty-five teams turned out for twenty-four cash awards.
 The Local Committee and Citizens of surrounding counties stood behind the Ontario Plowmen's Association and this proved a big factor in making the 1933 International Plowing

Match the best in the history of the organization.

Nursery Stock Fakirs
 "Be on guard against Nursery Stock Fakirs," warns J. A. Carroll, Superintendent of Horticultural Societies. "One community recently parted with several hundred dollars as advance on nursery stock to be delivered next spring. It has now been learned that the firm supposedly represented does not exist." "There are many reliable firms in Ontario," states Mr. Carroll, "and no one should purchase from a stranger without being sure of his credentials"

Bacon Production Feeds
 In the following feed mixtures recommended for bacon production the essential swine feeds are combined in suitable proportions:—
 Weaning pig mixture—ground barley, 100 pounds; ground oats, 200; shorts, 50; middlings, 100; bran, 50; bone meal, 10; salt, 5; skim-milk or buttermilk, 3 pounds to each pound of meal. If no milk, replace with 50 pounds of tankage. Growing pig mixture—ground barley, 150 pounds; ground oats, 200; shorts, 100; middlings, 50; bone meal, 10; salt, 5; skim-milk or buttermilk, 2 pounds to each pound of meal. If no milk, replace with 35 pounds of tankage. Finishing mixture—ground barley, 250 pounds; ground oats, 150; shorts, 100; bone meal, 10; salt, 5; skim-milk or buttermilk, 1½ pounds to each pound of meal. If no milk, replace with 25 pounds of tankage.

Weekly Crop Report
 Yield of potatoes in Peel County is reported about 50 to 60% of normal year, with prices at farms running from 65c. to 95c. per bag. One farmer in Huron County reports buckwheat yielding 20 to 30 bushels per acre on a 40-acre tract. The vegetable supply in Brant, as well as in numerous other counties, is low. Many corn cribs in Lambton have from 500 to 1,500 bushels of corn this fall, the first in six to ten years. The new cold storage plant at Forest will not meet the storage requirements of members of the Apply Growers' Association. Incidentally one of the largest apple crops in Ontario's history is being harvested. The hog population in Glengarry is down about 50%. Dealers are offering 44c. a bushel for buckwheat in that county. Roots have made excellent growth throughout the fall season in Lennox and Addington. Livestock in Temiskaming will go into winter quarters in good condition as a result of the improvement in pastures during the past month. The same holds true in the Thunder Bay area.

Horseshoe Pitching Contests
 The annual horseshoe pitching championships for the Canadian titles will be held at the Royal Winter Fair on the last four days of the Fair, November 27 to 30 inclusive. Championships are open in singles and doubles. Four prizes are offered in each sub-division, making 24 cash prizes in all. By a series of elimination, players will be stepped according to their score into Classes A, B and C in singles and doubles. Class B will be open to non-prize winners in Class A, Class C to those not successful in either A or B.

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