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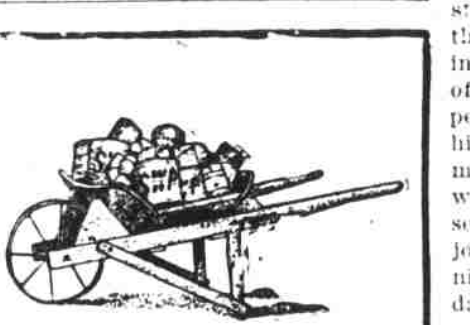
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THE SKY PILOT

By RALPH CONNOR Author of "The Man From Clengary" "Clengary School Days" and "Black Rock"

CHAPTER I THE FOOTHILLS COUNTRY.

BEYOND the great prairies and in the shadow of the Rockies lie the foothills. For hundreds of miles the prairies spread themselves out in vast level reaches, and then begin to climb over softly rounded mounds that ever grow higher and sharper till, here and there, they break into jagged points and at last rest upon the great bases of the mighty mountains.

Here are the great ranges on which feed herds of cattle and horses. Here are the homes of the ranchmen, in whose wild, free, lonely existence there mingles much of the tragical and comedy, the humor and pathos, that go to make up the romance of life.

The experiences of my life have confirmed in me the orthodox conviction that Providence sends his rain upon the evil as upon the good; else I should never have set my eyes upon the foothill country, nor touched its fascinating life, nor come to know and love the most striking man of all that group of striking men of the foothill country—the dear old Pilot, as we came to call him long afterward.

Our train consisted of six wagons and fourteen yoke of oxen, with three cayuses, in charge of a French half breed and his son, a lad of about sixteen. We made slow enough progress, but every hour of the long day, from the dim, gray, misty light of dawn to the soft glow of shadowy evening, was full of new delights to me.

I came to understand this better after my two years' stay among these hills that have a strange power on some days to awaken in a man longings that make his heart grow sick. When supper was over we gathered about the little fire while Jack and the half breed smoked and talked. I lay on my back looking up at the pale, steady stars in the deep blue of the cloudless sky and listened in fullness of contented delight to the chat between Jack and the driver.

Next morning before sunup we had broken camp and were ready for our fifty mile ride. There was a slight drizzle of rain and, though rain and shine were alike to him, Jack insisted that I should wear my mackintosh. This garment was quite new and had a loose cape which rustled as I moved toward my cayuse. He was an ugly looking

little animal, with more white in his eye than I cared to see. Altogether, I did not draw toward him. Nor did he to me, apparently. For as I took him by the bridle he snorted and sidled about with great swiftness and stood facing me with his feet planted firmly in front of him as if prepared to reject overtures of any kind soever.

At this point Jack came to my assistance, got the pony by the other side of the bridle and held him fast till I got into position to mount. Taking a firm grip of the horn of the Mexican saddle, I threw my leg over his back. The next instant I was flying over his head. My only emotion was one of surprise; the thing was so unexpected. I had fancied myself a fair rider, having had experience of farmers' colts of divers kinds, but this was something quite new.

"Oh, I guess I'll manage him," and once more got into position. But no sooner had I got into the saddle than the pony sprang straight up into the air and lit with his back curved into a bow, his four legs gathered together and so absolutely rigid that the shock made my teeth rattle. It was my first experience of "bucking." Then the little brute went seriously to work to get rid of the rustling, flapping thing on his back. He would back steadily for some seconds, then, with two or three forward plunges, he would stop as if shot and spring straight into the upper air, lighting with back curved and legs rigid as iron.

"Stick to him!" yelled Jack through shouts of laughter. "You'll make him sick before long!" I remember thinking that unless his insides were somewhat more delicately organized than his external appearance would lead one to suppose the chances were that the little brute would be the last to succumb to sickness. To make matters worse, a wilder jump than ordinary threw my cape up over my head, so that I was in complete darkness. And now he had me at his mercy, and he knew no pity.

At last, in one of the gleams of light that penetrated the folds of my enveloping cape, I found that the horn had slipped to his side, so the next time he came to his knees I threw myself off. I am anxious to make this point clear, for from the expression of triumph on the face of the grinning boy and his encomiums of the pony I gathered that he scored a win for the cayuse. Without pause that little brute continued for some seconds to buck and plunge even after my dismounting as if he were some piece of mechanism that must run down before it could stop.

By this time I was sick enough and badly shaken in my nerve, but the triumphant shouts and laughter of the boy and the complacent smiles on the faces of Jack and the half breed stirred my wrath. I tore off the cape and, having got the saddle put right, seized Jack's riding whip, and, disregarding his remonstrances, sprang on my steed once more, and before he could make up his mind as to his line of action plied him so vigorously with the rawhide that he set off over the prairie at full gallop and in a few minutes came round to the camp quite subdued, to the boy's great disappointment and to my own great surprise. Jack was highly pleased, and even the stolid face of the half breed showed satisfaction.



"Stick to him!" yelled Jack.

"Don't think I put this up on you," Jack said. "It was that cape. He ain't used to such frills. But it was a circus," he added, going off into a fit of laughter, "worth \$5 any day." "You bet!" said the half breed. "Dat's make pretty beeg fun, eh?" It seemed to me that it depended somewhat upon the point of view, but I merely agreed with him, only too glad to be so well out of the fight.

All day we followed the trail that wound along the shoulders of the round topped hills or down their long slopes into the wide, grassy valleys. Here and there the valleys were cut through by coolies through which ran swift, blue gray rivers, clear and icy cold.

While from the hilltops we caught glimpses of little lakes covered with wild fowl that shrieked and squawked and splashed, careless of danger. Now and then we saw what made a black spot against the green of the prairie, and Jack told me it was a rancher's shack. How remote from the great world, and how lonely it seemed this little black shack among these multitudinous hills!

I shall never forget the summer evening when Jack and I rode into Swan Creek. I say into, but the village was almost entirely one of imagination. In that it consisted of the Stopping Place, a long log building, a store and a half high, with stables behind, and the store in which the post office was kept and over which the owner dwelt. But the situation was one of great beauty. On one side the prairie rambled down from the hills and then stretched away in tawny levels into the misty purple at the horizon; on the other it clambered over the round, sunny tops to the dim blue of the mountains beyond.

"Hello!" said Jack. "I guess the Noble Seven are in town." "And who are they?" I asked. "Oh," he replied, with a shrug, "they are the elite of Swan Creek, and, by Jove," he added, "this must be a permit night."

"What does that mean?" I asked, as we rode up toward the tie rail. "Well," said Jack in a low tone, for some men were standing about the door, "you see, this is a prohibition country, but when one of the boys feels as if he were going to have a spell of sickness he gets a permit to bring in a few gallons for medicinal purposes, and, of course, the other boys being similarly exposed, he invites them to assist him in taking preventive measures, and," added Jack, with a solemn wink, "it is remarkable, in a healthy country like this, how many epidemics come near catching us."

And with this mystifying explanation we joined the mysterious Company of the Noble Seven.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Puzzling Figures and a Joke.

Put down the year you were born; add 4.

Then add your age at your next birthday, provided it comes before Jan. 1; otherwise your last birthday.

Multiply the result by 1,000.

From this subtract 694,428.

Substitute for the resulting figures the corresponding letters of the alphabet—A for 1, B for 2, C for 3, etc.

The result will give the name by which you are probably known.

This trick is given to suit the year 1905.

For 1906 and for every year after that add an additional 1,000 to the amount to be subtracted—viz, for 1907 make it 695,428, and so on.

Try this trick and see how it works.

Proper Treatment of Pneumonia.

Pneumonia is too dangerous a disease for anyone to attempt to doctor himself, although he may have the proper remedies at hand. A physician should always be called. It should be born in mind however, that pneumonia always results from a cold or from an attack of the grip, and that by giving Chamberlain's Cough Remedy the threatened attack of pneumonia may be warded off. This remedy is also used by physicians in the treatment of pneumonia with the best results. Dr. W. J. Smith, of Sanders, Ala., who is also a druggist, says of it: "I have been selling Chamberlain's Cough Remedy and prescribing it my practist for the past six years. I used it in cases of pneumonia and have always gotten the best results." Sold by Dr. H. T. Pope & Co. and Dr. R. G. Rozier.

Reflections of a Bachelor.

A good way to respect people is not to get too intimate with them.

You can put it down for a fact that when a husband and wife get along together they don't have to keep telling everybody so.

A girl can get so mad with you for musing up her hair that she will forget to be mad with you for the reason you did it.

Women have extracted more value and happiness from a cook book than from all the works that ever were written on mental philosophy.

Congress Tackles a Problem.

Congress is now wrestling vigorously with the problem of making a \$1 bill stretch far enough to cover a \$2 appropriation.

DO YOU WISH TO SAVE MONEY IF SO COME TO THE Old Reliable Hardware Store FOR HARDWARE OF EVERY KIND. Screen Doors and Windows, Sash, Doors and Blinds, Building Materials, Mill Supplies, Belting, etc. IMPROVED NO. NINE WHEELER & WILSON SEWING MACHINES. Best makes of Cook Stoves. A complete stock of the Best Paints always on hand, including the famous RUCHTER'S PAINTS. See Our Non-Rust Tinware. If it rusts we will give another piece. Come in and examine our beautiful SILVER-LINED NICKEL TABLEWARE. Sole Agents for ANCHOR BRAND LIME. We buy in Car Lots, Pay Cash and Sell Cheap. Get our prices before buying. We are in position to save you money. Thanking you for past patronage, we are Yours for business. McCORMIC & ROGERS, ROWLAND, NORTH CAROLINA

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