

# Sylvan Valley News

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## Cavanagh, Forest Ranger

The Great Conservation  
Novel

By HAMLIN GARLAND

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### CHAPTER XIX. THE PESTHOUSE.

Cavanagh had kept a keen watch over Wetherford, and when one night the old man began to complain of the ache in his bones his decision was instant.

"You've got it," he said. "It's up to us to move down the valley tomorrow."

Wetherford protested that he would as soon die in the hills as in the valley. "I don't want Lee Virginia to know, but if I seem liable to fade out I'd like Lize to be told that I didn't forget her and that I came back to find out how she was. I hate to be a nuisance to you, and so I'll go down the valley if you say so."

As he was about to turn in that night Ross heard a horse cross the bridge and, with intent to warn the rider of his danger, went to the door and called out: "Halt! Who's there?"

"A friend," replied the stranger in a weak voice.

Ross permitted the visitor to ride up to the pole. "I can't ask you in," he explained. "I've a sick man inside. Who are you, and what can I do for you?"

Notwithstanding this warning the rider dropped from his saddle and came into the light which streamed from the door.

"My name is Dunn," he began. "I'm from Deer Creek."

"I know you," responded the ranger. "You're that rancher I saw working in the ditch the day I went to telephone, and you've come to tell me something about that murder."

The other man broke into a whimper. "I'm a law abiding man, Mr. Cavanagh," he began tremulously. "I've always kept the law and never intended to have anything to do with that business. I was dragged into it against my will. I've come to you because you're an officer of the federal law. You don't belong here. I trust you. You represent the president, and I want to tell you what I know, only I want you to promise not to bring me into it. I'm a man with a family, and I can't bear to have them know the truth."

There were deep agitation and complete sincerity in the rancher's choked and hesitant utterance, and Cavanagh turned cold with a premonition of what he was about to disclose. "I am not an officer of the law, Mr. Dunn, not in the sense you mean, but I will respect your wishes."

"I know that you are not an officer of the county law, but you're not a cattleman. It is your business to keep the peace in the wild country, and you do it. Everybody knows that. But I can't trust the officers of this country; they're all afraid of the cowboys. You are not afraid, and you represent the United States, and I'll tell you. I can't bear it any longer!" he wailed. "I must tell somebody. I can't sleep, and I can't eat. I've been like a man in a nightmare ever since. I had no hand in the killing—I didn't even see it done—but I knew it was going to happen. I saw the committee appointed. The meeting that decided it was held in my barn, but I didn't know what they intended to do. You believe me, don't you?" He peered up at Cavanagh with white face and wild eyes. "I'm over seventy years of age, Mr. Cavanagh, and I've been a law abiding citizen all my life."

His mind, shattered by the weight of his ghastly secret, was in confusion, and, perceiving this, Cavanagh began to question him gently. One by one he procured the names of those who voted to "deal with" the herders. One by one he obtained also the list of those named on "the committee of reprisal," and as the broken man delivered himself of these accusing facts he grew calmer. "I didn't know—I couldn't believe—that the men on that committee could chop and burn"—His utterance failed him again, and he fell silent abruptly.

"They must have been drunk—mad drunk," retorted Cavanagh. "And yet who would believe that even drink could inflame white men to such devil's work? When did you first know what had been done?"

"That night after it was done one of the men, my neighbor, who was drawn on the committee, came to my house

and asked me to give him a bed. He was afraid to go home. 'I can't face my wife and children,' he said. He told me what he'd seen, and then when I remembered that it had all been decided in my stable and the committee appointed there I began to tremble. You believe I'm telling the truth, don't you?" he again asked, with piteous accent.

"Yes, I believe you. You must tell this story to the judge. It will end the reign of the cattlemen."

"Oh, no; I can't do that."

"You must do that. It is your duty as a Christian man and citizen."

"No, no; I'll stay and help you—I'll do anything but that. I'm afraid to tell what I know. They would burn me alive. I'm not a western man. I've never been in a criminal court. I don't belong to this wild country. I came out here because my daughter is not strong, and now—" He broke down altogether and, leaning against his horse's side, sobbed pitifully.

Cavanagh, convinced that the old man's mind was too deeply affected to enable him to find his way back over the rough trail that night, spoke to him gently. "I'll get you something to eat," he said. "Sit down here and rest and compose yourself."



HE BROKE DOWN ALTOGETHER AND SOBBERD BITTERLY.

Wetherford turned a wild eye on the ranger as he re-entered. "Who's out there?" he asked. "Is it the marshal?"

"No; it's only one of the ranchers from below. He's tired and hungry, and I'm going to feed him." Ross replied, filled with a vivid sense of the diverse characters of the two men he was serving.

Dunn received the food with an eager hand, and after he had finished his refreshment Cavanagh remarked: "The whole country should be obliged to you for your visit to me. I shall send your information to Supervisor Redfield."

"Don't use my name," he begged. "They will kill me if they find out that I have told. We were all sworn to secrecy, and if I had not seen that fire, that pile of bodies!"

"I know. I know! It horrified me. It made me doubt humanity," responded Cavanagh. "We of the north cry out against the south for its lynchings, but here under our eyes goes on an equally horrible display of rage over the mere question of temporary advantage, over the appropriation of free grass, which is a federal resource—something which belongs neither to one claimant nor to the other, but to the people, and should be of value to the people. You must bring these men to punishment."

Dunn could only shiver in his horror and repeat his fear. "They'll kill me if I do."

Cavanagh at last said: "You must not attempt to ride back tonight. I can't give you lodging in the cabin because my patient is sick of smallpox, but you can camp in the barn till morning, then ride straight back to my friend Redfield and tell him what you've told me. He will see that you are protected. Make your deposition and leave the country if you are afraid to remain."

In the end the rancher promised to do this, but his tone was that of a broken and distraught dotard. All the landmarks of his life seemed suddenly shifted.

Meanwhile the sufferings of Wetherford were increasing, and Cavanagh was forced to give up all hope of getting him down the trail next morning, and when Swenson, the forest guard from the South Fork, knocked at the door to say that he had been to the valley and that the doctor was coming up with Redfield and the district forester Ross thanked him, but ordered him to go into camp across the river and to warn everybody to keep clear of the cabin. "Put your packages down outside the door," he added, "and take charge of the situation on the outside. I'll take care of the business inside."

Wetherford was in great pain, but the poison of the disease had misted his brain, and he no longer worried over the possible disclosure of his identity. At times he lost the sense of his surroundings and talked of his prison life or of the long ride northward.

Once he rose in his bed to beat off the wolves which he said were attacking his pony.

He was a piteous figure as he struggled thus, and it needed neither his relationship to Lee nor his bravery in caring for the Basque herder to fill the ranger's heart with a desire to relieve his suffering. "Perhaps I should have sent for Lize at once," he mused as the light brought out the red signatures of the plague.

Once the old man looked up with wide, dark, unseeing eyes and murmured, "I don't seem to know you."

"I'm a friend. My name is Cavanagh."

"I can't place you," he sadly admitted. "I feel pretty bad. If I ever get out of this place I'm going back to the Fork. I'll get a gold mine; then I'll go back and make up for what Lize has gone through. I'm afraid to go back now."

"All right," Ross soothingly agreed. "But you'll have to keep quiet till you get over this fever you're suffering from."

"If Lize weren't so far away she'd come and nurse me. I'm pretty sick." Swenson came back to say that probably Redfield and the doctor would reach the station by noon, and thereafter, for the reason that Cavanagh expected their coming, the hours dragged woefully. It was after 1 o'clock before Swenson announced that two teams were coming with three men and two women in them. "They'll be here in half an hour."

The ranger's heart leaped. Two women! Could one of them be Lee Virginia? What folly—what sweet, desperate folly! And the other—she could not be Lize, for Lize was too feeble to ride so far. "Stop them on the other side of the bridge," he commanded. "Don't let them cross the creek on any pretext."

As he stood in the door the flutter of a handkerchief, the waving of a hand, made his pulse glow and his eyes grow dim. It was Virginia!

Lize did not flutter a kerchief or wave a hand, but when Swenson stopped the carriage at the bridge she said: "No, you don't! I'm going across. I'm going to see Ross, and if he helps help I'm going to roll up my sleeves and take hold."

Cavanagh saw her advancing, and as she came near enough for his voice to reach her he called out: "Don't come any closer! Stop, I tell you!" His voice was stern. "You must not come a step nearer. Go back across the dead line and stay there. No one but the doctor shall enter this door. Now, that's final."

"I want to help!" she protested. "I know you do, but I won't have it. This quarantine is real, and it goes!"

"But suppose you yourself get sick?"

"We'll cross that bridge when we get to it. I'm all right so far, and I'll call for help when I need it."

His tone was imperative, and she obeyed, grumbling about his youth and the value of his life to the service. "That's all very nice," he replied. "but I'm in it, and I don't intend to expose you or any one else to the contagion."

"I've had it once," she asserted.

He looked at her and smiled in recognition of her subterfuge.

"No matter; you're ailing and might take it again, so toddle back. It's mighty good of you and of Lee to come, but there isn't a thing you can do, and here's the doctor," he added as he recognized the young student who passed for a physician in the Fork. He was a beardless youth of small experience and no great courage, and as he approached with hesitant feet he asked:

"Are you sure it's smallpox?"

Cavanagh smiled. "The indications are all that way. That last importation of Basques brought it probably from the steerage of the ship. I'm told they've had several cases over in the basin."

"Have you been vaccinated?"

"Yes, when I was in the army."

"Then you're all right."

"I hope so."

There was a certain comic relief in this long distance diagnosing of a "case" by a boy, and yet the tragic fact beneath it all was that Wetherford was dying, a broken and dishonored husband and father, and that his identity must be concealed from his wife and daughter, who were much more deeply concerned over the ranger than over the desperate condition of his patient. "And this must continue to be so," Cavanagh decided. And as he stood there looking toward the girl's fair figure on the bridge he came to the final, fixed determination never to speak one word or make a sign that might lead to the dying man's identification. "Of what use is it?" he asked himself. "Why should even Lize be made to suffer? Wetherford's poor misapprehension life is already over for her, and for Lee he is only a dim memory."

Redfield came near enough to see that the ranger's face, though tired, showed no sign of illness and was relieved. "Who is this old herder?" he asked. "Hasn't he any relatives in the country?"

"He came from Texas, so he said. You're not coming in?" he broke off to say to the young physician, whom

Lize had shamed into returning to the cabin.

"I suppose I'll have to," he protested weakly.

"I don't see the need of it. The whole place reeks of the poison, and you might carry it away with you. Unless you insist on coming in and are sure you can prevent further contagion I shall oppose your entrance. You are in the company of others. I must consider their welfare."

The young fellow was relieved. "Well, so long as we know what it is I can prescribe just as well right here," he said and gave directions for the treatment, which the ranger agreed to carry out.

"I tried to bring a nurse," explained Redfield, "but I couldn't find anybody but old Lize who would come."

"I don't blame them," replied Ross. "It isn't a nice job, even when you've got all the conveniences."

His eyes as he spoke were on the figure of Lee, who still stood on the bridge, awed and worshipful, barred of approach by Lize. "She shall not know," he silently vowed. "Why put her through useless suffering and shame? Edward Wetherford's disordered life is near its end. To betray him to his wife and daughter would be but the reopening of an old wound."

He was stirred to the center of his heart by the coming of Lee Virginia, so sweet and brave and trustful. His stern mood melted as he watched her there waiting, with her face turned toward him, longing to help. "She would have come alone if necessary," he declared, with a fuller revelation of the self-sacrificing depth of her love. "and she would come to my side this moment if I called her."

He went back to his repulsive service sustained and soothed by the little camp of faithful friends on the other side of the stream.

During one of his clearest moments Wetherford repeated his wish to die a stranger. "I'm going out like the old time west, a rag of what I once was. Don't let them know. Put no name over me. Just say, 'An old cowpuncher lies here.'"

Cavanagh's attempt to change his hopeless tone proved unavailing. Encouraged by his hardships and his prison life, he had little reserve force upon which to draw in fighting such an enemy. He sank soon after this little speech into a coma which continued to hold him in its unbroken grasp as night fell.

Meantime, seeing no chance of aiding the ranger, Redfield and the forester prepared to return, but Lee, reinforced by her mother, refused to accompany them. "I shall stay here," she said, "till he is safely out of it—till I know that he is beyond all danger."

Redfield did not urge her to return as vigorously as Dalton expected him to do, but when he understood the girl's desire to be near her lover he took off his hat and bowed to her. "You are entirely in the right," he said. "Here is where you belong."

Redfield honored Lize for her sympathetic support of her daughter's resolution and expressed his belief that Ross would escape the plague. "I feel that his splendid vigor, combined with the mountain air, will carry him through, even if he should prove not to be immune. I shall run up again day after tomorrow. I shall be very anxious. What a nuisance that the telephone line is not extended to this point. Ross has been insisting on its value for months."

Lee saw the doctor go with some dismay. Young as he was, he was at least a reed to cling to in case the grisly terror seized upon the ranger. "Mr. Redfield, can't you send a real doctor? It seems so horrible to be left here without instructions."

The forester, before going, again besought Cavanagh not to abandon his work in the forestry service and intimated that at the proper time advancement would be offered him. "The whole policy is but beginning," said he, "and a practical ranger with your experience and education will prove of greatest value."

To this Ross made reply: "At the moment I feel that no promise of advancement could keep me in this country of grafters, poachers and assassins. I'm weary of it and all it stands for. However, if I could aid in extending the supervision of the public ranges and in stopping forever this murder and burning that go on outside the forestry domain I might remain in the west."

"Would you accept the supervision of the Washakie forest?" demanded Dalton.

Taken by surprise, he stammered. "I might, but am I the man?"

"You are. Your experience fits you for a position where the fight is hot. The Washakie forest is even more a bone of contention than this. We have laid out the lines of division between the sheep and the cows, and it will take a man to enforce our regulations. You will have the support of the best citizens. They will all rally, with you as leader, and so end the warfare there."

"It can never end till Uncle Sam puts rangers over every section of public lands and lays out the grazing lines

as we have done in this forest," retorted Cavanagh.

"I know, but to get that requires a revolution in the whole order of things." Then his fine young face lighted up. "But we'll get it. Public sentiment is coming our way. The old order is already so eaten away that only its shell remains."

"It may be. If these assassins are punished I shall feel hopeful of the change."

"I shall recommend you for the supervision of the Washakie forest," concluded Dalton decisively. "And so goodby and good luck."

England, his blood relatives, even the Redfields, seemed very remote to the ranger as he stood in his door that night and watched the sparkle of Swenson's campfire through the trees. With the realization that there waited a brave girl of the type that loves single heartedly, ready to sacrifice everything to the welfare of her idealized subject, he felt unworthy, selfish, vain.

"If I should fall sick she would insist on nursing me. For her sake I must give Swenson the most rigid orders not to allow her, no matter what happens, to approach. I will not have her touched by this thing."

Beside the blaze Lee and her mother sat, for the most part in silence, with nothing to do but to wait the issue of the struggle going on in the cabin, so near and yet so inaccessible to their will. It was as if a magic wall, crystal clear, yet impenetrable, shut them away from the man whose quiet heroism was the subject of their constant thought.

It was marvelous, as the dusk fell and the air nipped keen, to see how Lize Wetherford renewed her youth. The excitement seemed to have given her a fresh hold on life. She was wearied, but by no means weakened, by her ride and ate heartily of the rude fare which Swenson set before her. "This is what I needed," she exultantly said—"the open air and these trout. I feel ten years younger already. Many's the night I've camped on the range with your father with nothing but a pup tent to cover us both and the wolves howling round us. I'd feel pretty fairly gay if it wasn't for Ross over there in that cabin playing nurse and cook all by his lonesomeness."

Lee expressed a deep satisfaction from the fact of their nearness. "If he is ill we can help him," she reiterated.

There was a touch of frost in the air as they went to their beds, and, though she shivered, Lize was undismayed. "There's nothing the matter with my heart," she exulted. "I don't believe there was anything really serious the matter with me, anyway. I reckon I was just naturally grouchy and worried over you and Ross."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

## SOUTHERN RAILWAY COMPANY

Transylvania Division.

In effect January 2, 1911.

N. B.—Schedules figures given as information only, and not guaranteed.

Time	STATIONS	Time	
P. M.	Asheville	A. M.	
3 40	Asheville	Ar	1 20
3 45	Hendersonville	Ar	10 25
4 4	West Hendersonville	Ar	10 32
5 00	Yale	Ar	10 40
5 05	Horse Shoe	Ar	10 45
5 08	Canon	Ar	10 52
5 13	Etowah	Ar	10 56
5 20	Blantyre	Ar	10 59
5 26	Penrose	Ar	11 02
5 31	Davidson River	Ar	11 03
5 38	Plisgah Forest	Ar	11 30
5 42	Brevard	Ar	11 34
5 55	Selma	Ar	11 58
6 02	Cherryfield	Ar	12 01
6 04	Calvert	Ar	12 08
6 05	Rosman	Ar	12 54
6 12	Galloway	Ar	1 50
6 21	Quebec	Ar	8 43
6 30	Reid's	Ar	8 34
6 40	Lake Toxaway	Ar	8 25

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## Administrator's Notice.

Having qualified as administrator of the estate of O. H. Lyon, deceased, late of Transylvania county, this is to notify all persons having claims against said estate to present them to the undersigned on or before the 27th day of March, 1912, or this notice will be plead in bar of their recovery. All persons indebted to said estate are required to make immediate settlement.

This March 27th, 1911.

A. H. GILLESPIE,  
Administrator.

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