

The Settling of the Sage

By HAL G. EVARTS

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THE STORY

CHAPTER I.—At the Warren ranch, the "Three Bar," on the fringe of the "cow country," a stranger applies for work as a rider. He is engaged by the owner, William Harris. The girl's father, Cal Warren, had been the original owner of the place. The question whether the territory is to remain "cow country" or be opened to settlement is a troublesome one.

CHAPTER II.—Cattle "rustlers" have been troubling the ranch owners, the Three Bar, with a girl boss, having suffered more than others. The new hand gives his name as Cal Harris. By his announcement in favor of "squatters" he incurs the enmity of a rider known as Morrow. The will made by Cal Warren stipulated that half the property should go to the son of his old friend, William Harris, under certain conditions. The new arrival is the man, and he discloses the fact to Billie. The girl is suspicious of her new rider and takes counsel with her friend, the ranch cook, "Waddles." He quiets her fears.

"And have your water holes fenced," Morrow said. "As soon as you let the first squatter light."

"The government has prohibited fencing water holes necessary to the adjacent range," Harris cut in. "If that valley was mine I'd have put it in hay this long time back."

"But it wasn't yours," Morrow pointed out.

"No; but it is now, or at least a part of it is," Harris said. "I picked up that school section that lays across the valley and fled on a home quarter that butts up against the rims." He sat gazing indifferently out the door as if unconscious of the dead silence that followed his remark. More men had drifted in till nearly a dozen were gathered in the room.

"That's never been done out here—buying school sections and filing squatter's rights," Morrow said at last. "This is cow country and will never be anything else."

"Good cow country," Harris agreed. "And it stands to reason it could be made better with a little help."

"Whenever you start helping a country with fence and plow you ruin it for cows," Morrow stated. "I know!" "It always loomed up in the light of a good move to me," the newcomer returned. "One of us has likely read his signs wrong."

"There's some signs round here you better read," Morrow said. "They were posted for such as you."

"It appears like I'd maybe made a bad selection then. I'm sorry about that," Harris deprecated in a negligent tone that belied his words. "It's hard to tell just how it will pan out."

"Not so very hard—if you can read," the dark man contradicted.

The newcomer's gaze returned from down the valley and settled on Morrow's face.

"Do you run a brand of your own—so's you'd stand to lose a dollar if every foot of range was fenced?" he inquired.

"What are you trying to get at now?" Morrow demanded.

"Nothing much—now; I've already got," Harris said. "A man's interest lays on the side where his finances are most concerned."

"What do you mean by that?" Morrow insisted.

"You're good at predicting—maybe you're an expert at guessing, too," Harris returned. And suddenly Evans laughed as if something had just occurred to him.

Morrow glanced at him without turning his head, then fell silent, his expression unchanged.

A chunky youngster stood in the door and bent an approving gaze on the big plinto as he swung out across the pasture lot. The boy's face was small and quizzical, a shaggy mop of tawny hair hanging so low upon his forehead that his mild blue eyes peered forth from under the fringe of it and gave him the air of a surprised terrier, which effect had gained him the title of Bangs.

"I bet the little painter could make a man swing and make to set up in his middle, once he started to act up," he said.

"Calico wouldn't know how to start," Harris said. "A horse, judge his limitations, is what his maker makes him. I never favored the idea of breaking a horse to suit you every time you climb him. My horses are gentle-broke."

"But you have to be able to top off just any kind of a horse," Bangs objected.

"That don't hinder a man from gentling his own string," Harris returned.

Bangs turned his surprised eyes on Harris and regarded him intently as if striving to fathom a viewpoint that was entirely new to him.

"Why, it don't, for a fact," he said at last. "Only I just never happened to think of it like that before."

Morrow laughed and the boy flushed at the disagreeable ring of it. Morrow's face wore none of the active expectancy that stamps the features

of those uncontrolled desperadoes who kill in a flare of passion; rather it seemed that the urge to kill was always with him, had been born with him, his face drawn and overlengthened from the inner effort to render his homicidal tendencies submissive to his brain, not through desire for regeneration, for he had none, but as a mere matter of expediency.

"You listen to what the squatter man tells you," Morrow said to Bangs. "He'll put you right—give you a course in how everything ought to be done." He rose and went outside.

A raucous bellow sounded from the cookhouse and every man within earshot rose and moved toward the summons to feed.

"Let's go eat it up," Evans said and left the bunk house with Harris.

"Did you gather all the information you was prospecting for?" he asked.

Harris nodded. "I sorted out the man's number," he said.

"Now if you'd only whispered to me I'd have told you right off," Evans said. "It's astonishing how easy it is to pick them if you try."

All through the meal the gigantic cook hovered near Billie Warren as she sat near one end of the long table. It was evident to Harris that the big man was self-appointed guardian and counselor of the Three Bar boss. He showed the same fussy solicitude for her welfare that a hen would show for her helpless chicks.

"Praise the grub and have a friend at court," Harris murmured in Evans' ear.

Billie Warren had nearly completed her meal before the men came in. She left the table and went to her own room. When Harris rose to go he slapped the big man on the back.

"I'd work for half pay where you get grub like this," he said. "That's what I'd call a real feed."

Waddles beamed and followed him to the door.

"It's a fact that I can set out the best bait you ever throwed a lip over," he confessed. "You're a man of excellent tastes and it's a real pleasure to have you about."

Billie Warren opened the door and motioned to Harris. He went into the big front room that answered for both living room and sleeping quarters. Indian blankets partitioned off one end for the girl's sleeping room.

"You had something to tell me," she observed, after he had remained silent for the space of a minute, sitting in the chair she had indicated and gazing into the fire.

"And I'll have to start it a little different from the way I first counted on," he said. "Have any of the boys mentioned my name to you?"

She shook her head and waited for him to go on.

"You won't care much to hear it," he announced. "I'd thought some of spending two years here under some other name—but perhaps it's better to come out in the open—don't you think?"

The girl had straightened in her chair and was leaning toward him, her face white and her gray eyes boring straight into the man's. She knew now who he was—the man she had more reason to despise than all others on earth combined. Of the Harris family she knew nothing at all except that her father's lifelong regret had been the fact that the partnership between himself and his oldest friend, William Harris, had never been brought to pass. And this regret had, in the end, led him to try and cement that arrangement in the second generation. Five years before his trail had crossed that of the elder Harris for the first time since he had taken over the Three Bar brand; and when his will had been read she had known that on the occasion of that visit his old friend had played upon this sentiment to trick him into making it.

On all sides of her she had evidence that men were wolves who preyed upon the interests of others, and there was not a doubt that the father of the man before her had preyed upon her interests through the sentiment of her parent; no other possible theory could account for the strange disposal of his property, the will dated and signed at the exact time of his visit to the Harrises.

The tenseness of her pose was replaced by lethargic indifference and she relaxed into her chair.

"I've known all the time you would come," she said.

"It's too bad, Billie," he said. "It's tough having me wished on to you this way."

"Don't play that game with me!" she flared. "Of course you've disproved every drop of human decency in advance."

"It sure looms up like that on the surface," he admitted ruefully. "But I didn't have a hand in cinching you this way."

"You could have proved that by staying away. I wrote you a year ago that I'd donate you a half-interest in the Three Bar at the expiration of the time if you'd only keep off the place. But at the last moment you couldn't resist having it all. Ten more days and you'd have been too late."

The man nodded slowly.

"Too late," he agreed and sat looking into the fire.

She had been almost a son to her father, had ridden the range with him, managed the Three Bar during his sickness; and such was her loyalty to his memory that not a trace of her bitterness had been directed toward her parent. He had loved the Three Bar and had always believed that old Bill Harris, its founder, had loved it too. His will had stipulated that half of his property should go to the younger Harris under the condition that the man should make his home on the Three Bar for two out of the

first three years after her father's decease. The whole of it was to go to him in case she failed to make her own home at the Three Bar during her coheir's stay, or in the event of her marriage to another before the expiration of three years.

"Of course I'm tied here for two years," she said. "Or left penniless, if you can make it unpleasant enough to drive me away—which won't be difficult—you win."

"I wouldn't count too strong on that," he counseled mildly.

"Then why did you come?" she insisted. "Half of it was yours by merely keeping away."

"Maybe I'm sort of tied up myself—in ways you don't suspect," he offered.

"Very likely," she returned; "sounds plausible. You might offer to marry me," she suggested when he failed to answer. "You could gain full possession at once that way."

He removed his gaze from the fire and looked long at her.

"It will likely come to that," he said.

"I'll put a weapon in your hands," she retorted. "Whenever it does come to that I'll leave the ranch—so now you know the one sure way to win."

"I hope it won't pan out like that," he said. "I'll be disappointed—more than I can say."

She rose and stood waiting for him to go.

"Good night, Billie," he said. "I expect maybe things will break all right for us."

She did not answer as he went out. Waddles halted him in friendly fashion as he passed through the cookhouse, then wiped his hands and stepped into Billie's quarters. Waddles was a fixture at the Three Bar; he had ridden for her father until he had his legs smashed up by a horse and had thereafter reigned as cook. He was confidential adviser and self-appointed guardian of the girl. His mind was still pleasantly concerned with the stranger's warm praise of his culinary efforts.

"That new man now, Billie," he remarked. "He's away off ahead of the average run. You mark me—he'll be top hand with this outfit in no time at all." Then he observed the girl's expression. "What is it, Pet?" he inquired. "What's a-fretting you?"

"Do you know who he is?" she asked.

Waddles wagged a negative head. "He's Calvin Harris," she stated.

Instead of the blank dismay which she had expected to see depleted on



Waddles Wagged a Negative Head.

Waddles' face at this announcement, it seemed to her that the big man was pleased.

"The h—!" he said. "Seuse me, Billie. So this here is Cal! Well, well—now what do you think of that?"

"I think that I don't want to stay here alone with him while you're out after the horses," she returned.

"Wrong idea!" the big man promptly contradicted. "You've got to stick it out for two years, girl. The best thing you can do is to get acquainted; and figure out how to get along the best you can—the pair of you. Old Cal Warren had some definite notion when he framed this play; so it's likely this young Cal is on your side, too."

"But even more likely not," she stated. "Then what?"

"Why, then I'll have to kill him and put a stop to it," the big man announced. "But it's noways probable that it will come to that. Let's use logic. He spoke well of my cooking, which proves him a man of some discernment. No way to get around that. Now a man with his judgment wouldn't suspect for one living second that he could play it low-down on you with me roosting close at hand. Putting two plain facts together it works out right natural and simple that he's on the square. As easy as that," he finished triumphantly. "So don't you fret. And in case he acts up I'll clamp down on him real sudden," he added by way of further reassurance.

His great paw opened and he moved to illustrate his point as he shifted toward the door and the Three Bar girl knew that when Waddles spoke of clamping down it was no mere figure of speech.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

What is promised to children who obey their parents?—Ephesians 6:1-3.

Which is the Fourth Commandment?—Exodus 20:8-11.



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From Walnut Creek

We are having a very good Sunday School. Rev. N. H. Griffin, pastor of Walnut Creek church delivered a good sermon both Saturday night and Sunday morning.

Mr. T. M. Crane was taken to the Marshall hospital Feb. 19th for appendicitis. He seems to be improving very fast.

Mrs. Bessie Reece was visiting Mrs. Melvin Ball Sunday.

Mrs. Vernon Runion was visiting Mrs. F. C. Runion Sunday.

Miss Ola Wallin spent Friday night with Miss Evelyn Crane.

Mrs. Beatrice Sherman and children are spending a few days in Tenn.

Mr. and Mrs. E. D. Wallin and two small children spent Sunday, Feb. 17, with Mr. and Mrs. Willie Wild.

Mr. Thurian Runion and Mr. Edmond Sprinkle went to Asheville last Wednesday night.

Mrs. Johnie Kilpatrick was visiting her mother last Friday.

Mrs. Ida Runion's baby has been very sick.

Miss Etta Ball has gone to Black Mountain.

Mr. and Mrs. F. E. Runion's baby was very sick Sunday.

Hupmobile Touring Car for Sale—will give you bargain.

See me.

GUY V. ROBERTS

FROM BEAR CREEK

Our S. S. at this place is going along nicely. Next Sunday is our regular meeting day. Hope everybody will come.

Rev. Dell Sams will preach here Sunday.

Rev. R. Woodson was on Anderson

FELT BAD AFTER EATING

"FOUR YEARS ago, I suffered with heartburn and bilious indigestion. Whatever I ate disagreed with me. Gas on my stomach made me very uncomfortable. My tongue was coated and my color was bad. I needed a good laxative, and so my mother-in-law gave me some Black-Draught and told me to take it. I found it helped me very much, so I bought it for myself. Since it was the very thing I needed, it is a fine family remedy, and I use it when I need something for constipation."

"I also give Black-Draught to my children whenever they need something for colds or upset stomachs. Our whole family takes Black-Draught."—Mrs. G. C. Leary, 108 North Alston Ave., Durham, N. C.

BLACK-DRAUGHT for Constipation, Indigestion, Biliousness

Branch Sunday.

Miss Gertie Brown spent Tuesday night with Misses Vada and Lillie Brown.

—Mrs. Iona Brown who has been ill for some time is improving.

Mr. Allie Worley is on the sick list at this writing.

Mr. Burnett Brown spent Saturday night with his brother, Mr. E. Brown.

Mr. and Mrs. Joe Payne were on Little Pine Sunday.

Miss Lillie Brown spent Monday night with Mr. and Mrs. Will Lunsford.

Misses Vada and Lillie Brown, and Temple and Sylvia Freeman, Messrs Arthur Roberts, Bill Ball, Ervin Hensley, were out for a walk Sunday.

Mr. Ervin Hensley spent Saturday night with his sister, Mrs. Iona Brown.

Miss Martha Brown visited little Grace Worley Sunday.

Rev. R. Woodson is planning on spending this week in Asheville.

Miss Maud Marlow visited Miss Vada Brown Saturday.

Miss Elvie Marler visited Misses Maude and Ethel Marler Saturday night.

Come on with the news from Paw Paw.

From BUCKNER (Too late for last week.)

The farmers at this place are getting along well with their farm work. Among these are J. M. Briggs, C. C. Gregord, Ervin Waldroup, Decatur Robinson, J. J. Ponder, R. B. Beaver, Jim Roberts, Levi Buckner, Sam Gregory and C. Ponder.

Mr. Arnold Ramsey is building a new house.

Rev. R. D. Ponder cut his foot very badly last week.

Mr. and Mrs. Everett Robinson and Mr. and Mrs. Carl Duyck of Charlotte, N. C., spent last Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Briggs.

Mr. and Mrs. Henry Chandler have moved into their new home.

Miss Mittie Duyck left for Orlando, Florida, Monday, where she will spend a few weeks with her brother, Mr. A. J. Duyck.

Mr. Judd Ponder and Mr. D. L. Duyck went to Asheville on a business trip Monday.

Mr. Guy Hamlin and family have moved back to this place from Asheville.

Mr. Carl Ferguson is building a new barn.

JOHNSON BIBLE COLLEGE Kimberlin Heights, Tenn.

The new Women's Bible Class of J. B. C. was organized February 3rd, and will continue to meet each Lord's Day.

The February birthday dinner in the dining hall Tuesday, Feb. 12th, at six o'clock, was given in honor of Mrs. Beckett, Harold Lockwood, William Gudeman, and Ralph Underwood. There were after-dinner speeches and a popular solo followed by numbers by the quartet, making the evening an enjoyable one.

Tuesday afternoon, Feb. 19th, Bro. M. D. Clubb, Secretary of the Christian churches of Tenn., spoke to the students. He gave a message concerning the opportunity, work and requirements of young preachers.

Miss Bobo, who took charge of the dining hall during the illness of Miss Bullock (the matron) is to return to her home soon in Brazil, Ind.

The J. B. C. girls' basketball team, "Blue Birds," were victorious over L. M. U. in a game Saturday night, by five points. Also the J. B. C. boys won over Hiwassee by a score of 34-15.

Mrs. A. V. Isenberg, Misses Beatrice Garrett, Virginia Scott,

Margaret McLarty and Ruby Kent, Mr. Paul, Robert, and Homer Scott were out driving Sunday afternoon. Some places that they went were: Seven Islands, Ridgeway, Sevierville and Knoxville.

The Johnsonian open session, formerly scheduled for Feb. 23rd, will be presented Saturday, March 2nd. The program will consist of a comedy-drama in four acts, entitled "The Road To The City." The cast includes ten characters, represented by five boys and five girls.

Mr. William Hughey was the Sunday evening speaker of Feb. 24th. He delivered a good sermon, which was enjoyed by all. A special number was rendered by Mrs. O. R. Clary and Mrs. W. H. Bennett.

The annual Washington Birthday Banquet was given by the Olethian Literary Society, Friday evening, Feb. 22nd, at 6 o'clock. A program was given by members of the Society and Knoxville visitors.

The Senior Academy had a meeting Saturday and elected the following officers to serve the remainder of the school: President—Harry Wagner; Vice-president—James Workman; Secretary and Treasurer—Ruby Kent. Their motto is: "Give to the world the best you have, and the best will come back to you."

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From FAUST

Our school at Ebbs Chapel closed last Friday. We had a very successful school term. The teachers were all good Christian people and did themselves credit by their efficient work. They will be missed very much in our churches and community in general. We wish for each one of them a great success in their work.

Our S. S. work has been going rather slow for the past two months on account of the road being almost past fording.

We are hoping that we will be remembered and get some help in a way that will give us better roads. At present we are just about cut off from all other settlements. Of course, the ones who do not understand our condition are not affected by it, are not giving this much, if any, consideration, but it looks serious to us. It would be almost impossible to get any one out to a hospital, or get necessary things in here, such as groceries, feed and fertilizer, so much needed at present for plant beds.

We have been expecting some relief for quite a while, and would be a grateful people indeed for help inasmuch as giving us passable roads. We are anxious to get more spiritual life in our churches and Sunday School, and are made to wonder just how many settlements there are in our county where people are debarred from church on account of the roads being impassable.

Rev. J. D. King filled his regular appointment at the Baptist church last Sunday. His sermons are good. More impressive on account of his devoted Christian life. He has lived true, peaceful life that only comes to those who spend their life in the service of God.

On last Wednesday the stork topped at the home of Mr. and Mrs.

Ralph Bryan and left a baby boy J. R. Mr. Jeff Whitt and Miss Lois Ballard were quietly married a few days ago. We wish for them a long, prosperous and happy life.

Rev. J. S. Ponder and wife, who have been living near Marshall for the past few years, have moved to their son's, C. R. Ponder's, in this settlement. We welcome them back with us. They are good people and are well known and loved in here, as this was their former home.

We have enjoyed very much what has been said in this paper concerning the proposed hospital for our County, and think through its columns is a good way to let the people understand all about just how it is to be carried on should we get it.

Mr. John Forshia is building himself a nice dwelling house.

Mr. Cecil Ballard has moved back to California Creek.

People are preparing their tobacco plant beds, hoping to make bumper crops this year.

Miss Kathryn Kesler, one of our teachers, left Saturday for the Normal at Asheville.

Mrs. Victoria Jarvis, also one of our teachers, left Sunday for Mars Hill.

We are sorry to hear of the discord at Raleigh over our County affairs, and would be pleased if our County's business could be carried on in a smooth, impartial, business-like manner. But let us hope that all that is done will be for the best.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD—The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.—Psalm 23:1-6.

For whom did Jesus pray?—John 17:8-9.