Shorty's Yarns
Siems, Bill

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Ricky Comes and Goes

One day I ride in to the ranch and I see a kid’s saddle thrown under the shed cow puncher fashion with blankets over it. I examine it and it is shore the finest kid saddle I have seen. Ike comes out and I ask him about it. “Well,” Ike sez, “that belongs to Ricky. Ricky is Old Cap’s nephew. His Ma bein’ Cap’s sister. He is thirteen and has been fired out of school. His dad is the money man behind Cap. He seems to give the kid more money than he’d ort to but he don’t want to be bothered with him. His Ma don’t want to be bothered with him and she sent him to Cap. Cap sez he is shore pizen and don’t want him about. He sends him out to the ditch camp. The kid is doin’ sumptin’ with an open fire and cedar wood. The sparks set fire to a big tent and burn it up before the kid has a chance to do anything. Him bein’ left there alone fer a little while. So the Boss fetches him here till they can find another boardin’ school fer him. He ain’t a bad kid and he is shore hard. He never had a home and he has been sent from one school to another all his life. Jest trained and trained, that’s all. Him and Scutt, the little dog, is friends and him and the cook has throwed in together. But Carver, that new ranch hand, shore hates him and there ain’t no love lost. The kid is a match fer him at that.”

Ike starts out and before I git to the house I hear some shootin’ back of the store house. Around the corner comes the kid with a big rat he has shot and Scutt at his heels a waggin’ his tail. That kid has the cutest little double shot gun ever made. He tells me he has to load his own shells on account he cain’t git shells fer that small a shot gun, and that he has a set of moulds fer a round ball that fits the gun and fer sixty or seventy yards it throws a patched ball purty true. I asks him if he has shot the rabbit that hangs around the corral and he sez, “No, he don’t do no harm. You can git him any time you want to. If you let him be, mebby you’ll have more rabbits later on. Besides Scutt likes to chase him and he knows Scutt cain’t ketch him. They got to have sumptin’ to do.” I looks at that kid, too old fer his years. He shore had never been a pet. Carver comes past and speaks to me, then he wants to borry the kid’s little gun to shoot at some quails in the paster. The kid seems willin’; he tells him he ain’t got but eight shells loaded but he can have them. I ask the kid why he let Carver have his gun and he tells me he won’t
do a lot of harm with it. I go up to the back porch and the cook comes out when he hears Carver start shootin’ he has a big laugh and the kid winks and grins. Purty soon Carver comes back and he is shore hot. He sez the gun ain’t wuth a cuss. The kid sez nothin’ and cleans his little shot gun. That night at supper the cook keeps talkin’ about Carver tryin’ to git us some honeymoon quails. “Well,” the cook remarks, “I’ve heered of tryin’ to throw salt on their tails but when a feller starts tryin’ to throw rice at ‘em I reckon they must a been honey moon quails.” “Who was throwin’ any rice?” Carver wants to know real savage like. “Well anyhow,” the cook sez right pleasant like, “that’s what the kid loaded them shells with.”

Me and Ike busts out laughin’ and so does the cook but the kid looks straight at Carver and only grins and Carver he looks hostile at the kid and sez sumthin’ or other. Things goes along smooth fer a spell. Ricky helps the Morton kid move horses from one camp to the other and watch fences. They git along fine together. Then one day Carver finds out about Ricky burn’in’ up the tent. We was eatin’ dinner and he tackles the Kid. “Ha Ha; you went and burnt up a tent and your uncle run ye out. Didn’t you?” Carver sez pointin’ his knife at Ricky. Ricky looks at him but don’t answer. “Har Har!” Carver laffs. “I reckon thet will hold ye fer a spell. Cain’t talk eh? Cat got yer tongue?” That is jest baby talk to Ricky and he looks at Carver and grins. “The tent was jest an excuse,” Ricky sez. “He fired me because I won too many pennies off him playin’ pennywinkle. He’s a poor loser.” “You couldn’t beat old Cap playin’ cards nor no other game,” Carver allows. “You don’t play it with cards,” Ricky tells him, “you play it with pennies and a funnel. I’ll show you after dinner and I’ll win all the pennies you got. That is if you got any and ain’t afraid to play.” Carver allows he will have to be showed. So, after dinner the kid goes out with a funnel he borrows from the cook and sets down on the wash bench. He puts the funnel in the belt of his pants and then he lays back his head and puts a penny on his forehead and tries to flip it into the funnel without usin’ his hands. Wunst he does and twicet he don’t. He explains that each feller takes five turns and the one that ain’t playin’ furnishes the pennies. Carver allows he will go it a round and go first. He sets down and fixes the funnel and Ricky is gettin’ him a drink of water out of the bucket with the big dipper but he hands Carver a penny with his free hand. Carver lays back his head to fix the penny and when he does Ricky dumps a dipper full of water into the funnel. Carver is a slow thinkin’ feller and before he knows it his pants is plum soaked and Ricky has dodged past the cook into the kitchen. It’s a good thing Carver didn’t take after him because we was all laughin’ till we couldn’t have done a thing to have stopped him.

Ricky never talked about it. He never talked about anything he did and young Morton rode in to get him to help move some cattle and he rode away for a couple of days. Things seemed pretty peaceful. The next week the boss tells me they have got an old hoss buyer who is willin’ to buy up all the fuzz tail ponies on the range and ship ‘em.
The boss and Cap figger it is a good riddance and are plum tickled to make the deal. The old hoss buyer comes to our place and he has his grandson along. The boy is Ricky's age and is plum mean. His granddad tells everybody the kid is so bad he has to keep him along with him. That kid shore thinks he is plum onmanagable, and he struts about like a tom turkey. He tries to start sumpthin' with the Morton kid but Young Morton is sensible and keeps out of his way. So does Ricky. The old hoss buyer goes over to the ditch camp to see Cap and the boss takes him. Carver sees his chance and he tries to rib up a fight with Ricky and that kid. Ricky ain't afraid but he tries to dodge it. He tells me and Ike that he has all the trouble he wants and hopes he don't have to fight. I asks him if he thinks he can lick that kid and he grins and sez, “He don't act like a kid that ever fought much.” But it ain't no use. The kid and Carver crowded Ricky too far. The fracas started when the kid went to use Ricky's saddle. That's the only time I ever saw Ricky lose his temper. Carver has butted in. Ricky turns on him. “Aw shut up you poor feeble minded joke,” he sez. Then he turns to the kid and sez, “All you need is a couple of punches in the nose to make you bawl like any other spoiled baby.” The kid makes a wild swing fer Ricky's jaw and rushes. Say! Ricky shows he has learned about as much boxin' and hard hittin' as a kid his age can ever hope to know. I've seen worse work in the ring. He don't dodge back; he steps inside the swing. His left smacks twice on the kid's nose and his right shoots in a wicked punch to the kid's stomach. The kid staggers back off balance and Ricky peppers his face a dozen times before he is knocked off his legs. He comes back like a tiger but Ricky has it all. He is too quick and too strong, and besides it would take that kid five years to learn what Ricky knows about boxin' and rasslin'. Another minute and the kid is settin' on the ground again. The kid jumps back and tries to grab a rock and when he does Ricky is right on top of him and stomps his hand till it is out of the game. Then the kid runs and gits behind Carver and I see him and Ike is about to mix fer Ricky downs that kid and begins to work him over a plenty and him squealin' like a stuck pig. Ike is standin’ Carver off. So to stop more trouble I pulls Ricky off. When that old hoss buyer come back the kid runs to him and tells a big story. He hunts Ricky up and starts in to tell him off. Ricky looks straight at the old man and sez, “If you're that kid’s granny you better take him to a doctor. I think he's got a bad hand.” Then he walks away and leaves the old feller gappin’ fer sumpthin’ to say. Well, the old feller was so mad he left and the hoss deal fell through. Was Old Cap mad? “That Whelp,” he sez. “No good, I tell ye. A Johner frum the day he was born. Look what he went and done.” Cap, I tells him, the kid wasn't to blame. “Neither am I,” Cap roars. “They got to git him out of here.”

It wasn't many days till Old Jed drove up in a spring wagon. He had a wire fer Ricky. They had found another boardin’ school fer him. He was to start next day. He never changed face, but he rubbed Scutt's ears and begun to pack his stuff. He give the
cook his little shot gun and put his ridin’ gear in a sack. He asked Jed if he’d stop in so he could give it to the Morton Kid. “Why Ricky,” Ike sez, “don’t give that val’able stuff away. We’ll keep it fer you till you come back.” Ricky’s hard eyes got a little dim but his voice was steady. “They won’t let me come back,” he sez. “They don’t let me stay no place. But I’ll be a man some day and then mebby—” he stopped. “I’ll say you’ll be a man,” Ike sez and walks toward the corral. Old Jed got ready to start next mornin’ and I could see he didn’t like the job, but the kid told him point blank not to worry because he was only doin’ what had to be done anyhow. Scutt wanted to foller and we had to tie him up. The boss had done started Carver over to the ditch camp with his bed and a team, which was sensible from the way Ike and the cook had been lookin’ at him. Ricky gives Ike and me each a card. “That will always find Dad,” he sez, “and he will know where I am. He’s all right only he’s always busy. I’ll write him about you boys.” We gits on our hosses and starts out and Ricky climbs into the spring wagon with old Jed. “Gawd, what a man,” Ike sez. “Who?” “Why Ricky of course.” Ike turns in his saddle and looks back. So do I. And there is the little feller settin’ beside old Jed with his hat pulled down over his eyes and as straight as a ramrod. I wisht he’d look back and wave, I sez. “Not him,” Ike answers short and sharp. He ain’t the lookin’ back kind, and shore ’nough, as the wagon topped the hog back, we watched, but the little feller never turned his head.

**Cap Takes to Mules**

Old Cap liked to git about and see what was a goin’ on but he was soter handicapped on account he had to drive and there was a heap of places where he couldn’t git with a spring wagon or a buckboard. He was too heavy fer most of the hosses and besides he wasn’t the build to fit right comfortable onto a shifty cow pony. He is about to give it up when he gits a notion. We had a great big wheel mule we called Jumbo and he is plum gentle and a fast walker. We had no mate for Jumbo so the Boss sells him to Cap. Cap gits a big saddle and him and Jumbo goes into pardnership. Him and the mule gits along fine. He likes to brag about Jumbo. One night in the hills Cap kinda lost his bearin’s so he gives Jumbo his head and of course Jumbo goes right back to his feed box. After that Cap allows Jumbo has more sense than all the hosses in Arizona put together.

He gits so fond of Jumbo he hates to ride him hard, so he tells the Old Man Morton and Jed to keep a look out fer another big mule that is a good traveler, because bein’ big and heavy he needs two mules. Which is a good idee seein’ that Cap does a heap more travellin’ around since he learns how handy it is to ride than to drive.

I had been sent over to Cap’s place to help with some work and one day Manuel Cordova rides in on his top hoss. A big buckskin which Manuel allows is the best all
around cow hoss that ever looked through a bridle. He has just finished workin’ for another outfit, and he stops to ask Cap what he will pay by the head to git some wild cattle led out from up in the rough country. Cap don’t like him and he don’t mind lettin’ Manuel see it, but he stays to dinner. There is just me and Cap and the cook. Manuel don’t onsaddle but I have turned out my hoss. I have another one in the corral but I ain’t saddled him yet. After we eat Manuel starts on Cap some more about them steers. Cap tells him mighty plain that he ain’t interested and besides the round up has worked that country and got what is there. He sez he has been up there and ain’t seen no steers, so if Manuel is so much better than anybody else why don’t he own an outfit of his own and not be around breakin’ hosses and fightin’ wild cattle in the brush. And if there is any cattle up there he don’t want ‘em right now anyhow.

Manuel gits mad too. “You are a smart man, Captain,” he sez. “Those steers are from three to six years old and still you don’t want them. Mebby you think they raise you some calves? Mebby you like to start a dairy with them. Mebby you walk the old mule around behind the wild steer. Mebby you get him in a spring wagon, No? Perhaps you make a ditch to him and get him with a boat.” Manuel like all old cowboys hated farmin’. He knowed hosses and cattle but he didn’t know old Cap. Cap moves about twice as quick as most men his size and age. Before Manuel knowed it, Cap had grabbed him and threwed him out at the door about three times as far as I ever allowed a hundred and fifty pound man could be throwed by hand. He picks himself up and then picks up his hat. He walks out to the corral and takes my rope off the saddle. Then he leads his hoss out of the corral and shuts the gate and gits on. He is takin’ his time. I don’t like the look of it, not any. Cap goes to the door. Don’t go out there I sez, he aims to start sumthin’. “If he does,” growls Cap, “I’ll pull him off that yaller billy goat he’s ridin’ and beat him to death. I can lick a whole crew like him.” Manuel builds a loop in my rope and rides over to a high post where Cap has a weathervane and ropes it off. He starts to build another loop and look around fer sumthin’ else to tie onto. Out of the house busts Cap. I yell at him to come back, but it ain’t no use. Manuel lifts his hoss and drops a loop right around Cap’s middle and away he goes. He don’t jerk him down but he just leads him a little faster than he could run without help till he gives out and falls down. He gits a rough fall and a hard jerk. Then Manuel throws off his dallies and leaves Cap and my rope behind and lines out. Before Cap can git back to the house he is plum out of rifle shot.

Cap wasn’t as mad as I figgered he would be. He was sick and shook up purty bad. It looked to me like it might have done him a heap of good to rope him and bust a fall out of him. He seemed soter puzzled. Finally, after he got his wind and took a drink, he sez, half to hisself and half to me, “That feller wasn’t so bad, come to think. He could ‘a broke my neck if he’d wanted to, or he could ‘a drug me to death. I reckon he jest wanted to take a fall out of me, and you cain’t blame him a heap neither. Shorty, a rope
is a terrible weeping in a good man's hands." The cook nor me don't say nothin' to nobody about the affair and the funny thing neither does Manuel.

In a week or less in comes Old Man Morton with a big bay mule as big as Jumbo. He ain't old and is a runnin' walker. Cap is shore pleased with him. He names him "Sambo." Between his business and Jumbo and Sambo Cap is shore a busy hombre. A couple days later he takes his big spy glass and starts out on Sambo. He don't git home at dark and we was worried. "Do you reckon he depended on Sambo to fetch him home?" Jed asks. "Well if he did," sez Old Man Morton, "he is plumb out of luck. That mule was raised at Joe Gray's place forty mile from here." In the mornin' we starts out. Morton and Jed starts leadin' Jumbo and trackin' Cap. I takes the spring wagon and heads fer Gray's ranch. When we parted Morton sez. "And to fix it all Manuel Cordova is breakin' some colts over at Gray's ranch. Looks like almost anything might happen."

It is late in the afternoon when I sight Gray's ranch and what do you reckon I see from a distance? There is Cap and Manuel settin' cross legged on the ground makin' marks in the dust. When I drive up they come over to meet me. "Hello, Shorty," Cap sez. "Smart mule that Sambo. I went up into the rough country yesterday to look around and I see some right big cattle with my glass jest like Manuel here said. I didn't notice till it got dark. I got off my course and I give Sambo his head. That there mule was homesick and he come right to here and made good time too. I got in before daylight." After supper I asked him if he aimed to go back in the wagon and let me ride the mule or if he aimed to ride Sambo back. "Well," he sez, "a day's rest won't hurt me or Sambo either and seizin' he come all this way he ort to be allowed a day to visit. Tell the boys I'll be back day after tomorrow."

He got back jest when he said he would, and he took up a crew from the ditch camp and built a corral and paster in the round country, at a big spring. A little before it was finished in comes Manuel and his pardner to git out them cattle. Cap was shore friendly to 'em and he sez to us. "The steers they take out will more than pay fer the corral and paster and Manuel allows if we put in that camp and work them cattle some they won't git so wild from now on."

That night the cook and me was alone and he sez, "I sailed with old Cap fer several years. If he ever heard any preachin' it never cooled him down none. But I am sayin' that there Mexican boy shore improved him a heap when he busted that fall out of him."

_Squint Comes and Goes_ 3

When I gets back to the home ranch after my work at Cap's place, I finds a mighty peculiar jasper there. The cook said that Ike had fetched him out from town same as he had me. I didn't take kindly to that remark because I don't like no part of this feller. Whatever we talked about he always horned in like he knowed a heap more than the
rest of us, and besides when he made a wise talk he always let on like he knewed a whole lot that he wasn't tellin'. He would mostly talk with one eye shut and fix his face to look real secrety like or else grin like you didn't know what it was all about. The cook gives him the name of “Squint.” It shore suits him and is adopted by the hands unanimas. The Boss not knowin' his name and not bein' over fond of him jest calls him Squint too.

I asks Ike why he fetches Squint here and he looks at me and grins. “Well,” he sez, “fer one thing I lacked jest a little of bein’ even with the cook. And I shore fetched him some unhappy moments when I got Squint here. Besides before I gits acquainted with him I hears him talkin’ to some other fellers. He is the biggest liar I ever listened to. Shorty, he is even a bigger liar than you, and you know that is sayin’ a lot.” And then Ike walks off a chucklin’ to hisself. That shore does git onder my skin. No feller likes to be called a liar even by his best friend. But the funny part of it is that no feller likes to be told that another jasper is a bigger liar than he is. That is right peculiar but it is a line backed truth jest the same.

He is one of the kind that you want to kill a dozen times a day if you see him that often, and he always runs true to form. If one of the ranch hands wants to start a team he has to wait till Squint gits outen the road fer he is bound to be walkin’ right in front of them about that time. When we are handlin’ stock in the corrals and we open a gate to put ‘em through we have to wait till he gits out of the way fer jest that shore he is bound to come a walkin’ through from the other corral and makes us wait till he is out of the way. If the boys drives in with hay to fill the feed racks he is bound to be doin’ sumpthin’ right at the first empty place they want to drive to. You have all seen that kind of fellers, but he is the worst I have seen. He was bad enough out of doors but inside the house he shore starts the cook to studyin’ murder. There was a dance at the school house and of course he goes along. The women folks don't seem to take to him much but that don't bother him not any. The new school marm was there and her and me got along fine. I got as many dances with her as anybody, and she talked to me considerable. That was when the other fellers would let her alone long enough. The next day Squint had more to talk about than anybody. Ike kids me about makin’ a hit with the school marm. Right away Squint shets one eye and looks at me plenty wise. “You didn’t do so good,” he sez. “There was a heap a goin’ on there that you didn’t know about.” That shore makes me mad and I remarks to him. You are plenty smart. You seem to see more with one eye shet than the rest of us does with both eyes open.

We was beginnin’ to figger what the finish of this Squint person and the rest of the crew would be, fer even the Boss is beginnin’ to give him a mighty hard look when he gits in the road or horns in on a talk. It looked like trouble but we was spared a lot of thinkin’. It happened like this. Ike and old man Morton has fetched in some strays and among them was a plum salty bull. They leaves him in a corral with some cows overnight and then the next day the Boss tells them to put him out into the home paster.
Well, they gits him alone in the corral and then opens the gates and turns him out. He comes out a trottin’ with his neck bowed. He has to go through the corral where the wagons and other things is to git to the paster gate. And shore enough there is Squint a pesticatin’ around on foot. The bull makes fer him and he lines out to git onder a wagon and he purty near makes it, but in a case like that purty near don’t count. That is, not in favor of the feller that is tryin’ to git away. So jest as Squint goes down onto all fours to dive onder the wagon, the bull ketches up to him and gives him a turrible jolt. It knocks him plum through and aginst the hind wheel on the fur side. The bull gits his head onder the wagon and upsets it. Time he gits the wagon off’n his horns, he looks up and sees the paster gate and he leaks out of that corral plenty sudden.

We gether Squint up and he is still livin’. He ain’t hurt as bad as what you might think, but his head is cut turrible and he has got sech a wallop behind that he is stove up till he cain’t hardly walk. The next day he is a sight. His head is swelled so bad his eyes is most shet and he can jest cripple around by holdin’ onto things. This calms him down fer a spell, but soon as he begins to git better he is right up and at it ag’in. He begins to bawl us out fer lettin’ the bull in where he was. Well, Squint, I sez, there was a heap goin’ on that you didn’t know nothin’ about. The cook he cuts in and sez, “When you go to foolin’ with bulls or divin’ onder wagons you ort to keep more than one eye open at a time.” That shore touches him off and he is plum rim fired fer a spell. The way he cusses us all out is right interestin’ to hear. When he slows up one of the ranch hands cuts in. “Squint, you been a gittin’ in the road of everybody and everything all yore life, and when you keep on like that you can figger that sometime you will git in the road of sumpthin’ that’s a goin’ to knock you outen there.” That sets him a goin’ again and he allows that we are a rotten lot to pick on him when he cain’t take care of hisself, and that he knows he will be out a month’s pay before it is all over. “No you won’t,” the Boss tells him, “yore wuth a heap more like you are than you was before. You git full pay fer two weeks and by that time you’ll be able to git in everybody’s road ag’in and you can go bother some other outfit.” Squint gits mad fer a couple minutes but it ain’t long till he has one eye shet and is tellin’ ‘em big as ever.

One mornin’ the boys goes out to take down a beef that was killed and hung up the evenin’ before. Ike is comin’ fer the storehouse with a quarter that is most gittin’ him down, and there in the door is Squint. He shets one eye and shakes his finger and gives Ike some orders. “You fellers ort to put that there meat in the other corner of the storeroom from where you been a puttin’ it,” he allows. “You see the mornin’ sun don’t git to that wall, and by the time the evenin’ sun gits to that wall and it gits warm it is most night and time to hang it out ag’in.” There is Ike a standin’ with all that load of beef. He dassent knock Squint over on account of him bein’ crippled. He finally eases past him and when he comes out frum there he is so hot his clothes is smokin’. Well Ike I sez, you shore did git even with the cook that time. Ike don’t say a word, but he is mad till mighty nigh noon.
About three weeks after Squint gits hurt he allows he is able to travel so the boss takes him to town and pays him off. We don’t see him fer a couple of months and then one day me and Ike goes into Harry’s place fer a couple of drinks and we hear Squint’s voice. He has his back turned and don’t see us. He is tellin’ about the bull affair. One feller grins at us, but Squint is so busy with his windy that he ain’t noticin’ nothin’.

“Yessir, fellers, that little kid walked out into the corral jest as they was a turnin’ the bull out. I hollered at ‘em but you know how thick headed some rannies is. They never noticed and let him out. I was a ways off but I went fer there as fast as I could. Shorty was on the fence and the boss was behind a post. Ike went onder a gate and old Morton he was up on the chute. I couldn’t stand there and see that bull tear a pore little kid to pieces and I run and grabbed her and threwed her into a wagon. I tried to git onder the wagon but I had lost too much time a savin’ the kid. The bull hit me and then he upset the wagon. I was busted up purty bad. I won’t never know how I done it but hurt like I was I managed to grab the kid and roll onder a gate with her. The bull trotted around the corral a couple of times and then he sees the paster gate and trots out there.”

I looks at Ike. He is so mad he is plum froze. You was right Ike, I sez, he is a bigger liar than I am. You ort to be proud of him. He is shore a doing you proud. Ike walks down along the bar and grabs him by the shoulder and spins him around. “Who is this here little kid you are tellin’ about?” he asks and his voice cut like a knife. “Oh, hello, Ikey!” Squint sez holdin’ out his hand. “Feelin’ better by now?” There comes a smack like when the baseball hits the bat fer a home run and then the gents present waits in respectful silence till Squint becomes conscious ag’in and stands up hangin’ onto the bar with one hand and rubbin’ his jaw with the other. “You tell that bull story like it happened.” That was all Ike said. Squint’s eyes was poppin’ wide open like a beetle’s this time. He worked his jaw a couple of times before he could make any talk come. You bet he don’t shet one eye. He lights right in and tells that bull affair as clear and plain as anybody could and fer a man that ain’t used to tellin’ the truth, he shore does wonderful.

That night when we are ridin’ home I asks Ike if he reckons he is even with me and the cook. He allows he is and that he is even with Squint too but that he will have to listen to us about it fer the next two years. He tells the boss about it a couple days later in front of me and old man Morton, and he makes the same remark about havin’ to do a lot of listinin’. “You might and then ag’in you mightn’t,” the boss remarks lookin’ at him plum straight and hard. Ike looks some surprised. He figgers the boss and him is on good terms up to right then. “Mebby you know why we didn’t git that shipment of white faced yearlin’s we had as good as closed the deal fer?” the boss sez. Ike still looks surprised and sez nothin’. “Well, Ike, I’ll tell you,” the boss sez cold and even like. “That pest you drug out here to bother the whole outfit fer yore own amusement, went and wrote to a Californey outfit he used to work fer, jest what they could be got fer.
They sent a man and he closed the deal before we had a chance to make a second bid. We wouldn't 'a overbid 'em anyhow. It would 'a knocked too big a hole in the profits. From here on up the creek if you git half drunk and find some pest you want to play with you ride toward some other outfit with him. You'll save yourself the trouble and distance of comin' by this way.” Ike don't say a word. He is plum took down, fer him and the boss has built up the outfit together, but one thing is plain. The spread has growed till Ike is only a cow puncher and not worth no more than I am. The boss bein’ a business man and Ike ain’t. Somehow all at once I feel sorry fer Ike and I offer to quit with him but he sez, “Shorty, me and the boss didn't start all at once and we won't quit sudden. I got a lot of my own business to settle up around here and durin’ that time I can figger whether I start a little spread of my own or go back to my little home town by the Ohio river and be a nice comfortable peaceful old villager.”

Cap and Morton Each Tell One

It don't seem long since that night at Cap's place, but I reckon it has been. We was talkin' how modern things was gittin’. Steam boats, railroad trains, telegraphs, and even a talkin’ machine had been invented. And to cap it all, folks was a goin’ up in baloons at the county fairs and jumpin’ out in parachutes. We reckoned the world was a goin’ so fast that before long people would all kill their self with the fool contraptions that was bein' invented.

“Well,” Old Cap remarks, “it is shore a lot safer at sea than it was when I was a boy on the old wind jammers. I mind one time we got in a turrible storm down in the South Seas and we was blowed off our course fer several days. Then one night all of a sudden it stopped. It wasn’t long before we was a rockin’ on some long slow swells. Come mornin’ we looked around and there we was on a calm sea. Over off our port bow about a league away was a British schooner flyin’ a distress signal. About half a league to sta’board was a Portuguese bark with a distress signal. We signalled and got no answer. The second mate took a boat and we went over to the Portuguese. Her boats was missin’, and the ropes still hung from the divats where they had cast off. I was young and spry and I went up a rope. The ship was deserted. I found a rope ladder and cast over the side and the boat’s crew and the second mate made the boat fast and came aboard. We couldn’t find much water. The mate read the log and read it. The last entry was a month old. They had been becalmed there fer weeks and had took to the boats as near as we could make out. One of the crew could read some Spanish and he done the translatin’. That afternoon we manned a boat and went over to the British schooner. We could make out more of her log. Her crew had took to the boats about a week before. That ship had come in just after the Portuguese and knew all about her, but why would they take to the boats in an open sea with a good ship under them? We
found out. They mentioned that they had seen a sail to the East but it was so far off they couldn’t signal to ‘em. Well, they had looked through glasses from the crow’s nest and they saw signs of a steady breeze about twenty or twenty-five knots to the East. They took to the boats in hope of makin’ it to the course of some ship. Purty slim in that forsaken sea. The first mate was an old feller and when him and the skipper took the bearings, they had a big talk. The mate allowed he had heard of the place. It was a dead calm only three or four times a year and then a hurricane swept it and tore everything to pieces. We rested a couple of days and figgred. The sharks was so bad that we couldn’t do nothin’ in the water but the sail maker and the carpenter got a big idee.”

“We had some machinery aboard. So they rigged up a wind wheel like a dutch wind mill and put a big fly wheel on it. Then they set a four man windlass with a turrible big wooden wheel in the middle, and we was to work four men at a time on it. It was hard to start but it was geared so high that when we got it a goin’ it shore hummed. After an hour the skipper shouted the news that the ship was movin’ some. It was slow work but we kept at it all we could stand. The third day we felt a kind of a breeze. We run up some canvas and the next thing we knowed we was in the track of the air current and sailin’ right along. We had to tack a little but we made it. We looked back and saw by the water that the breeze had sort of curved to meet us. You see them boys had worked so hard on the wind wheel that they had made the ship go slow and not only that but the suction of the air they blowed had bent that there breeze about five miles off its course. It was wonderful work.”

Old Cap lit his pipe and looked at us cow fellers and grinned. It was shore a turrible yarn to match. I looked at Ike and the Boss. Some of the boys looked at me and then we all looked at the Old Man Morton. Old Morton lit his corn cob and took a few drags at it and set his hat back. We knowed he had took the dare and he begun like this:

Speakin’ of the weather and the likes makes me think of one time we was on the trail with two thousand head comin’ up from Texas. We had been goin’ right good till we got up into some mesa country and it was sometimes hard to make them cattle take the trails down the hills off them mesas. One night we bedded down on a big mesa and the next morning the remuda and the wagon went down into the canyon ahead of us. The herd started all right but before they went far they stopped on us. As fast as we would rim off a lead they would double back and keg up with the rest. Things was at a standstill. We would lose a week if we went back through the pass and tried the other way. We had along a Baptist preacher’s son named Abner Baines. He was the only one that wasn’t cussin’. He watched and worked and then he got to the boss and asked him if he thought a hard rain would do any harm. The boss was about to jerk a few doubles of rope off’n his head but he cooled down and asked what he meant. “Well,” sez Abner, “this is a ‘dobe hill and if it is wet nothin’ could stick on it, it would be so slick.
I aimed to pray for rain if you thought best. I don't want to disturb the Lord unnecessarily." The boss told him if the language that was being used didn't disturb the Lord, a few prayers wouldn't. Abner wanted us all to go down to the wagon in the canyon so as to be safe when the rain came. The boss allowed we better go down and eat and come back anyhow, and he would stay up there and see what he could do.

When we got to the wagon, Abner wanted the cook to move a little on account he mightn't be safe when the cattle come down but the cook was mad anyhow and mighty nigh hung the pot hook over Abner's head. But Abner was calm. He took off his spurs and chaps and hat and ast us to be quiet. "If yore strippin' fer a corn dance," sez the cook, "I might could give you some tom tom music with a pan or pot lid." We was fit to bust for laughin' but we had got over our mad and was glad for anything that would make us forgit them pesticatin' cattle fer a few minutes. Well, Abner he kneeled down and he shore knew how to address the Lord plum respectful. He did so good that we all forgot everything and was listenin'. Then all of a sudden the sky got dark and before half an hour there come a regular cloud bust. That 'dobe hill got wet and slick and of all the bellerin' and floppin' and slidin' you ever seen or listened to, it happened then. We jumped on our hosses and took out. The cook clum a tree. We jest got clear of the mess before there was cattle bunched all around the wagon and trompin' over pots and pans and buckets. But wust of all here come the boss on his hoss slidin' right amongst 'em. And he was a yelling at the top of his voice and cussin' Abner. "Abner! Abner!" he yells, "git the Lord stopped fore we all git washed down the canyon!" We was all still fer a spell and then Old Morton sez: "Yessir, Abner shore savvied prayin'."

"When I was a kid at Sunday school," sez Ike, "we was told about two people that told a big lie right in a meetin' house and was both struck dead. Good thing this ain't no meetin' house."

"Don't go fetchin' religion into this here peaceful descussion," sez Old Morton. Which remark was too much fer even Cap and the Boss, so we all had a good laugh and hunted up our bed rolls.

Stickin' to One Idee

One night over at the home ranch several of us was settin' on the front porch. We got to talkin' about folks changin' from one plan to another and losin' a lot of time and work. Old Man Morton he reckoned it was better fer folks to stick to one idee. "Fer instance," he sez, "there was old Hard Rock Jake and Farmer Tom. Jake he had a tunnel on the side of a mountain and Tom he took up a claim in the bottom of a wide canyon right below and kep' a tryin' to farm without any water. It was plum pitiful. They would go away and work till they got a stake and then come back. Jake would dig in his mine and Tom would farm. Sometimes in a right good year Tom would make
a few beans and now and then Jake would git the notion that he was close to the gold.[“] They fit Injuns and part of the time they packed in water. They made a flood ditch and a ‘dobe house and corral. They had put in twenty-four years in that canyon before they knewed it. The boys allowed that the next year they might gang up and give ‘em a silver anniversary or sumpthin’ like that, when what do you s’pose? One day old Jake shot right into a big onder ground water supply and it come a runnin’ out of the tunnel. He give Tom the water fer his ranch and was a goin’ to start another mine but while they was a buildin’ a ditch to take the water to Tom’s ranch they had to drive a tunnel through the point of a little hill and if old Jake didn’t strike a right good lead of gold. Which shows if you foller one idee fur enough it will git you some place worth while even if it don’t git you where you aimed to go in the first place.”

Lige Jones lit his pipe and set quiet fer a spell and then he begins. “A idee folled plum out is all right if the idee is practical. If it ain’t you may go wrong. When I was a kid back in the Kaintucky hills I knowed a fambly by the name of Bascomb. Old Mis’ Bascomb she was one of them one-idee women folks. Well, one day she was a washin’ down by the spring and the hogs got to botherin’ around where she was at. She got to kickin’ ‘em outen the road but her bein’ barefooted she hurt her toes a heap more than she did the hogs. Finally she rech down and grabbed up a rock and throwed overhanded at one of ‘em. The Old Man Bascomb had left a scythe hung up in a tree and she ketched her arm on it and cut her self sumpthin’ turrible. It looked like she might bleed to death but the oldest boy he heered his mammy hollerin’. He havin’ been to school knowed what to do. He took her apron and tied it around her arm and then he twist-ed it up with a stick till he got the blood stopped. After that the old lady was plum tick-led with that idee of a rag and a twistin’ stick whenever anybody got hurt.[“]

[“]Well a couple of years later the oldest boy got to goin’ out in the evenings and settin’ up with the gals. So of course he got a razor and took up shavin’. The younger kids was all told to keep their hands offen that razor but the youngest boy was foolin’ with the razor one day and his mammy come in and ketched him at it. He got skeert and give a jerk and a jump and like to a cut his neck in half. The blood shore popped out. Old Mis’ Bascomb she grabbed down the roller towel and the mush paddle and went to work on him. The second oldest gal tried to git her stopped but she was big and stout and she had jest one idee. She got the blood stopped but the pore kid was choked to death before she did. The Old Man Bascomb wasn’t so mad about it as folks reckoned he would be. He allowed the kid would ‘a bled to death anyhow and besides they had a big enough fambly that they could spare one to experiment on now and ag’in.”

We had a big long laigged Texas boy with us by the name of Curley Powers. He was reckoned to be a plum good liar and the boss sez to him, “Well, Curley, what do you think of this here parminint idee business[?”] Curley he rolls up a cigarette and
studies for a minute and then he cuts into it. “Well,” Curley begins, “down in Texas they don’t go much on idees. Not that they would bar a feller fer havin’ a idee, but there is about the same things fer everybody to do and about the same things to do with and so they jest go ahead and they all come out about the same, idee or no idee. The only critter in our settlement that had a parminint idee was a big old long horned steer. He used to water at the creek and then come up and stand in the shade of our shed. Our corral was pickets on three sides and a shed on the North side. I used to lay fer him and chunk him but all he done was to run round and round the corral. I set old Shep on him but he jest went round and round the corral. He would run over anything that got in his way but you couldn’t run him away from that corral till he got good and ready to leave. He had a sot idee. Old Shep got discouraged and give it up.”

“One day the folks went to town and left me there alone. I see the old steer a waterin’ out down on the creek and I got up on the shed roof and laid fer him. I waited till he was a standin’ there chawin’ his cud and I jumped off and lit on his back, aimin’ to ride him round the corral till he give out. But when I lit on him he bucked me so high I could see plum over the timber down along the creek. He went around so fast that he was right under me when I come down and I lit on his back. The jar was turrible, but he bucked me right up in the air ag’in, and he was plum around and under me when I lit. I jest couldn’t git to the ground fer he had that one idee of goin’ round that there corral. I don’t know how many times he went around. I lost all track of ’em. I allowed my time had come, when all of a sudden I lit on the ground. I rolled out of the way and fainted plum onconcious.”

“When I was able to git up there was the steer a layin’ dead. He had gone round that corral so fast and so many times that he had tore all the dirt away frum the south east corner post and he had run into it when it leaned out, and killed hisself. Him not bein’ able to see it fer the fog of dust he was raisin’. That is why I happen to be so long laigged and onperportioned like. I was split up a heap further than was nacheral after that there awful experience. Fact is you might say I am the victim of the parminint idee.” Old Man Morton was a little bit peeved about the boys buildin’ stories like they thought he lied and he remarks. “Too bad you couldn’t a lit on yore haid a few times and shortened yore neck a little.”

**Hell Among the Yearlin’s**

Between the home ranch and the south ranch laid a big strip of country we called Middle Valley. What with their fencin’ and fixin’ Cap and the boss had got it shut off from everybody else and was a holdin’ it fer winter paster. There was a little ranch on a creek at the head of the valley that was called Dutchman’s well, on account a Dutchman had settled there and dug a well right beside the creek. The creek sunk there and that was the only water in the valley except the seeps along the wash.
A family had been leasin’ the place from an agent in town fer the last several years but they only had about three hundred head and had agreed to let us water there the comin’ winter. Things looked all right only that Ike was fixin’ to leave the outfit. He had spent all his time in slack seasons turnin’ everything he had into cash. He was sore on the spread. Old Cap wanted to beller and boss around, and the boss had rigged up a room in the house and called it an office, and he was gittin’ mighty high chinned too.

Cap come over to the Home Ranch one day and that night after supper they sent fer Ike. The winder to the office room was up, so I stood out in the dark where I could hear and see what went on. Ike was shore a different Ike when he walked in. He speaks right up. “All right, what’s heavy on yore minds?” That aggervated ‘em both. They wanted folks to act polite and scairt around where they was. “Jest this,” the boss sez, giving him a hard look. “You got so much of yore own business to tend to that we don’t need you around here. We are givin’ yore time and you can tend yore own business all you want to.” Ike takes a folded paper out of his shirt pocket and hands it to the boss. The boss looks it over and then pulls some figgers out from his desk and looks ‘em over. Then he sez to Ike. “We was a goin’ to give you two dollars and a half more, but we’ll settle to yore figgers.” He writes a check and hands it to Ike. “We’ll allow you a team to haul what stuff you have off the ranch tomorrow if you know where you want it sent,” sez the boss. “Thanks,” Ike sez, “but I ain’t imposin’ on folks that ain’t as able to take care of their self as I am. I’ll git my stuff and myself out from here without any half cocked help.” Old Cap has been settin’ quiet up to now but that teches him off and he hits the table with his [fist] and bellers, “Looka here, you lanky lubber! Git smart with me and you’ll have a lot of help a gittin’ out o’ here right now!” “Why hello Grampa,” Ike sez right pleasant, “you here? I thought you was in a pen with the weaners sence the hands had took to leadin’ you around on the end of a saddle rope.” Cap jumps up but he takes a look at Ike and sets down ag’in. “That’s better,” sez Ike right cool. “Be a good boy and Sandy Claus won’t furgit ye. I fetched a present fur ye but seein’ yore sech a good child fer to mind I might keep it till further on.” Then he turns to the boss and remarks. “Speakin’ of folks tendin’ to their own business, that’s exactly what I aim to do. And, in case you ever have trouble in doin’ the same I might could help you some.” Then he walks out.

I goes into the kitchen to have a smoke with the cook. The cook drags a jug from under a bunch of boxes and we have a good one. He slaps me on the belt at the left prong of my vest. Then he grins and remarks, “So you was aimin’ to take a stack yore-self.” Well, sez I, the boss is bigger’n Ike and Cap is a reglar old grizzley, besides they might ’a had things fixed to suit ‘em in the office. Ike fetched me here. “Me too,” allows the cook, “which is feed fer thinkin’!” He repurduces the jug and this time we takes one that is right refreshin’. The cook gits down his fiddle and tunes her up. He cuts into a real tune and he shore makes the old fiddle hum. Purty soon the boss pokes his head in at the door and asks, “What’s all this noise. We got business to tend to.” Old Cap
shoulders past him and stands there glarin’ savage at us. “That what you been hearin’,” sez the cook, “is a selection from grand opray commonly knowed as Hell Among the Yearlin’s.”

I lines my left knee with Cap’s belt and don’t even bother to git up. Cap is puzzled and goes back to the office. The boss looks at the cook fer a spell and the cook looks at him. I know right then that they are both gettin’ better acquainted in five minutes than they have done in five years.

Next night I got in late on a tired hoss but the cook he had a drink fer me and saved a hot supper too. “Shorty,” he sez, “they’ll be hell among the yearlin’s all right. Old Tenley Tingle and his nephew Joe was here today and got Ike and his stuff.” I knowed them two. They was two Ozark mountain Missourians thet had been workin’ on the ranches and ditches that summer. They each had a mule team, a covered wagon and a dog.

Two weeks later there was a big free dance and feed at the school house. It was to celebrate the fact that Joe Tingle had married Mandy Black and was movin’ into Dutchman’s wells ranch. Me and the cook went. Old man Morton comes to me durin’ the dance and sez, “Shorty, Ike has bought Dutchman’s wells. He has bought Black’s cattle and sold ‘em. I ast him about waterin’ our stock there this winter and he sez no. Blacks has bought a hay ranch on the river.” That shore makes me onhappy and I don’t dance with nobody except the widder Baisinger who is my best friend. I goes to Ike and asks him. He allows I can tell the boss what I like. I tells him he brought me here and he only grins and sez, “Shorty, I never had no Colt’s when I was talkin’ to the boss and Cap, but I knowed you was right handy with yours.”

Next mornin’ I tells the boss and he is shore mad. He saddles and goes to the South Ranch to see Cap. He is gone two days. When he comes back he is plenty mad. He asks me if I have used my homestead right, and when he finds out I have, he hunts up two of the other hands. Then he tells me, “We will show Ike a thing or two. We will get these two men to homestead claims at Clay Flat. That is right in the middle of the valley. We will build a big reservoir and fence some hay land. If you remember there is a place where the bed rock crops out and makes a natural flood dam. But why do you reckon he sold Black’s cattle?” Well, I sez, mebby he reckoned you’d push all the stuff you could into the valley and keep him from takin’ in stock to winter. Right then the boss grins and allows I am right and tells me to hitch up to the spring wagon and take them two fellers over and show ‘em the layout. In the mornin’ we hitches up. Jest before noon we tops the hog back that separates Home Ranch from Middle Valley. I can see with my neckid eye but the boss pulls out his glasses and gives it some see. Looks like we been asleep, I sez, but the boss sez nothin. “Go ahead down there,” he sez. I drives down there and I can see what happened. A frame shack is bein’ built and a line of plowed ground marks the line of flood ditch that leads from the outcroppin’ of bed rock to the best reservoir sight in Middle Valley. Ike rides up to welcome us on his
big grey. “Git down and have a snack seein’ it’s nigh noon,” he sez. The boss gives him a dirty look and asks, “How long has this been a goin’ on?”

Ike answers, “Well, generally speakin’, it’s been goin’ on fer a spell. The boys filed on these claims and the ditch right before the last roundup and hay cuttin’, but seein’ they was busy, they didn’t start work till a couple weeks ago. I aim to live on this place where the reservoir is and the old man can live on his place. Nice little place and spread, come to figger it out.”

The boss keeps his temper and acts right cheerful, but when he gits back he is plum mad and ready to do all the damage he could. They makes a work and sells off some more cattle, then they pushes everything they can into the end of the valley to keep stuff from driftin’ down toward the river.

I goes to the boss and sez, now looka here, them fellers has sunk a sump in the wash at Clay Flat and that gives ‘em all the water they want fer them and their teams. But two things. Fust, we are dependin’ on the seep water in the wash fer stock water. Second, what about the upper end of the valley? Who is watchin’ that? The boss allows that he aims to send some hands into the wash with plows and scrapers to holler out some water holes, and if Ike don’t want his little paster and alfalfa field and his hay stacks et up it is up to him to fix his fences or stay there and watch ‘em. I tells him that there was a big after growth when they cut the last alfalfa and in case some of our stuff gits in there and bloats Ike mightn’t bother to stick ‘em. The boss laffs and allows that when Ike and them hill billies lets somebody else have that stubble paster he will put in with me.

Well, one day I gits oneasy and rides up to Dutchman’s wells to see what the score really is, and there I git a look. The alfalfa fence is down and scattered all over the forty acres of stubble is a passel of critters that has bloated and died. That with the short water in the seeps has shore knocked the profit out of all the winter feed in middle valley.

We finally gits everything settled on the winter range or the feed and the boss surprises me by tellin’ me one mornin’ to go over and see what Ike and the Tingles will sell out fer. I goes to the cook and asks him about it. He tells me to come around fust thing after I have saddled up. Well, I does that same. The cook he purduces the jug. We has one, we has two, we has three. The cook fills up a half pint flask and sez, “Make two of it and talk to ‘em.” Well, I goes over and wants to know what they will take and sell out. All they does is to take me up to the Dutchman’s Wells and show me where the creek is runnin’ a wheel which taps the onderflow and allows the Dutchman’s Wells Ranch to raise twice the feed they have been raisin’!

The boss ain’t a whole lot pleased when he hears that and he reckons he has to go over and see Cap. I asks him what’s the matter with Cap comin’ over here, but he tells me he don’t want Cap over here because he is on the fight and wants to go over to Middle Valley and warn them folks they better never try to run cattle in there or he’ll make it plenty hot for ‘em. I git the boss’s angle. Ike is a good rifle shot and them two
hill billies is past master with a rifle. And the whole three of ’em has nerve enough to
tackle a buzz saw and give it three rounds the start.

We go over to the South Ranch in the buckboard. Cap is shore rairin’ mad and I
can see the boss is plum fed up on him and would be mighty glad to git out of part-
nership with him. Cap is goin’ over to talk to Ike, he sez. Well I goes out pirootin’
around and I finds four sharp tacks. I goes into the shop and gits a awl and a screw
driver. I rips a little place in the britchin’ of Cap’s mule harness and punches a hole with
the fine awl and purty soon I has four tacks in the two britchin’s. The rip don’t hardly
show the heads is between the leather and I dabs a little dope off an axle on the points
where they stick through.

When we start next mornin’ old Cap has the boys hitch up his big mules to the
spring wagon. He takes a new hand and has him saddle up and go along. The new
hand is a hard lookin’ feller and he has a carbeen onder his stirrup leather. Cap comes
out and lays a Winchester back of him in the wide wagon seat. The mules is fat and
frisky. The boss and me are in the buckboard and Cap starts off. He went down a lit-
tle hill below the house and the britchin’ comes up on the mules. Them tacks done
wonderful. First the mules spooks and then they starts to run and kick. Old Cap sets
back and breaks one line and then the team quits the wagon tracks and upsets the spring
wagon on rough ground. Cap and his shootin’ iron go a flyin’. Cap tries to git up but
no use, he has a broke laig. I help git the mules and while the rest is workin’ on Cap I
works on the harness and gits the tacks out. Cap’s laig is broke between the knee and
the ankle. The spring wagon is a wreck, so the boss takes him to town in the buckboard
and sends me back to the home ranch. I tells nobody about the tacks, but all I wished
was it had happened at the beginnin’ of spring instead of winter.

Ike Gets a New Job

About a week after they had took Cap to town with a broke leg the Boss goes in to
see him. He comes back all fussed up. It seems that Cap and his side kick is not the
main owners of the spread on the South. But that it belongs to a big company back east
that has sorta gone into the cow business for a side line. They own a big lot of shippin’
and they want Cap back on his old job with the company. They figger he is worth a
heap more there. And there you are. Cap leavin’ soon with a busted leg. Old man
Morton laid up with the rheumatiz and his grandson ridin’ in to tell us that the outfit
on the south has got to start feedin’ right soon. How come they got to feed soon? I
wants to know. The Boss tells me that Ike has bought a lot of feed and cattle in the
south valley from the little outfits and while they was pesterin’ him in Middle Valley he
has put them all up onto the South Ranch range and kep’ ’em there till they took their
cattle back. And now him and Old Tenley Tingle and a couple of hands is over in the
South Valley finishin’ ’em out on the feed he has bought and the South Ranch has been et out so bad that they have to feed their beef hay to stock cattle this winter.\textsuperscript{15}

The worst of it is, they want us to go over and help git started. I asks Old Morton’s grandson what is the matter with Manuel and that new tough guy doin’ some feedin’. He tells me they are both gone. They didn’t git along none too good. Tough guy gits to settin’ on Manuel’s hosses. They had some words about it. Manuel finds there is a reward out fer this jasper and so he turns him in. The kid sez that the feller will have a steady job fer a long time and Manuel ain’t goin’ to work none this winter on account he has to lay off and spend his summer’s wages and some of that reward money.

The kid and me puts our outfits into the spring wagon and starts over fer the South Ranch. When we git there we learn the cook aims to stay if it is agreeable but Cap’s old pardner is goin’ to go back with him. The cook tells me that Ricky’s dad is one of the directors of the company and that fer some reason he has got in touch with Ike. That shore does mix matters up.

Well, we had got a couple new hands and was startin’ on the feedin’, the Boss bein’ there that evenin’ when in comes old Tenley Tingle and Ike. They has a couple of beds along and makes down in the bunk house. Of course, they comes in fer supper. They acted like nothin’ had happened. The cook seemed happy and was kiddin’ Ike about how the gray hairs was beginnin’ to show above his ears, and the Boss asks old Tenley Tingle how things was a goin’ fer him. Tingle lights his pipe and gives a wicked grin.

“Come to think of it,’ he drawls, “this here year makes me think of a year we had back home. We had been havin’ bad luck fer a spell but this season we raised a spankin’ big wheat crop. So all we had to bother about was the thrashin’ bill and some old stale debts that we had got used to a long time ago. We had the wheat stacked and ready when the wind begun to blow. It blowed hard and steady. Then come a earthquake. It would shake turrible fer a spell and then stop but the wind kep’ right on a blowin’ steady. It kep’ that up fer two days and nights. When it was over we went out and looked. What d’ya s’pose? We didn’t have to thrash aytall. The earthquake had shook out all the wheat and the wind blowed the stray and trash away so all we had to do was to shovel it up and put it into the barn.” The Boss looks at him and remarks, “I suppose all that hadn’t hurt the barns any.” “No not to speak of,” old Tingle answers. “You see, we had a lot of hogs and as soon as the rumpus started they all run and crowded under the barn and as you might say, sorter absorbed the shock. The house did slide around some, but it finished up [closer] to the well and the wood pile than what it was and made things handier all around. And speakin’ of hogs, the wind scattered the straw over the ground we aimed to plow fer fall wheat. All we had to do was to take the rings outen the hogs’ noses and turn ‘em out on that ground. They tore and rooted it up a plenty. Then we sold the fat ones and put the rings back into the rest of their noses and harried the ground down and seeded it. It was the most plum agreeable season we ever
had." The Boss remarks that he don’t doubt such things happen sometimes and when he sees ‘em he knows he will be considerable interested. We knows the old cuss means sumthin’ but we can’t figger him out. Next day we know. In drives Ricky’s dad and another company man and they tell us that seein’ Cap is leavin’ and Morton not able to run the spread they have made a deal with Ike to ramrod it. The Boss don’t look none too happy, but he is up against it. They all git together in the front room of the house and talk it over and they reckon as soon as Cap can move they will go into town and sign papers and Cap can come out and git what stuff ready he aims to take with him. Meantime, Ike is to stay right there and set on the lid. When I asks Ike about it he tells me that when he left our outfit and the [trouble] started in Middle Valley Ricky’s dad started in to write to him and ask him what the row was, seein’ Cap had wrote sumthin’ about it. He told them the truth. Then when they found how he had moved in on their range when they moved on his’n he gits more letters. He still tells things straight and lets ‘em know he aims to keep right on with his own affairs and advises that they do the same. It seems Ricky’s dad thinks a heap of his boy by now and that Ricky is gettin’ to be a right good sized sensible young feller. The old man talks it over with him and asks him about Ike. The boy gives him his idee and the old man allows that Ike has shore played a good level headed game and wants Ike to meet him at the ranch.

I tells Ike I am glad things turned like they did and he looked tickled and sez, “Shorty, did you ever hear that old sayin’ All on account of a horseshoe nail?” I tells him I have, and he remarks that hoss shoe nails ain’t had much to do with this, but he reckons a few tacks or fine steeples might have done sumthin’ toward it. I asks him what he means and he sez: “Well, I know Cap and his mules. I know you. It ain’t like them mules to have a ruckus with Cap. I’ve knowed some funny things to happen when you was around. So I have looked them harness over. You would have to be lookin’ fer it to see it but it looks to me like the brchin’ had been doctored a little. Well, it saved a rifle fight at Middle Valley and got Cap outen here and put me and my old friend the Boss back to where we will likely be friends again.”

The Boss and me goes back to the home ranch and I know the Boss reckons he has had a fall took out of him because he don’t talk about business aytall only jest common things that happen every day and don’t mean nothin’. I tell our cook about it, and he sez: “Shorty, you ort to a’ said to the Boss like he allus said to I and you. Isaac is an extremely fortunate person.”
THE OLD TIMERS

A bunch of old longhorns that's peacefully grazin',
Like forty years back you'd still see on the range.
When you come to think of it, it's really amazin',
The way that the people and cattle both change.

I used to allow it was cruel and dirty
To pen up the cattle and cut off their horns.
In a feed lot a muley may look sort of purty,
But out on the range he looks mighty forlorn.

They didn't feed cotton cake, beet pulp and silage.
There wasn't no corn chop and hay by the bale.
But how them old critters could put on the milage,
A goin' to water or hittin' the trail.

They may have looked rangy and tougher than leather,
But they had lots of beef steak wrapped up in their hide.
They could fatten on grass and stand all kinds of weather,
And it didn't hurt much if a few of 'em died.