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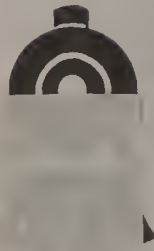
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American Books

# Aggie Ranch



*"I am a Cowboy!"*



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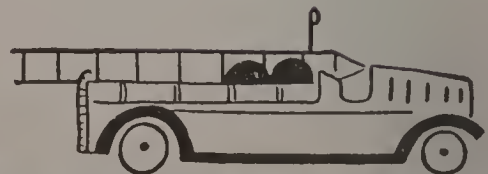
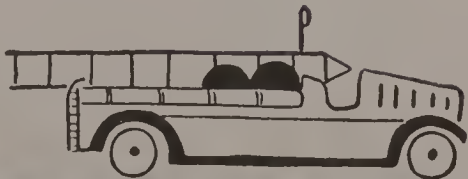
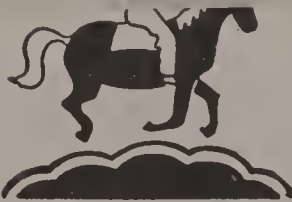
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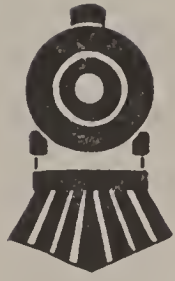
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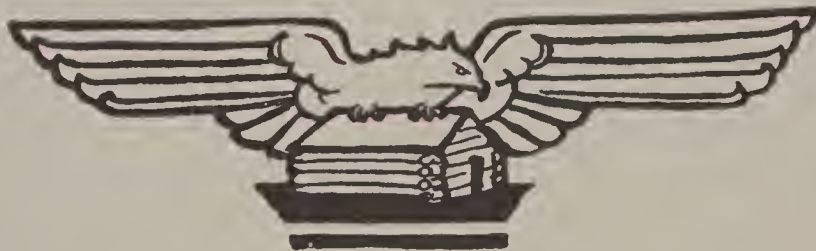




*Little American Books*

# Eagle Ranch

by *Arilda*  
Bertha M. Rhodes



*Pictures by*  
Eleanore M. Hubbard

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ENGINE COMPANY No. 25  
FLAG TO THE FRONT

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## EAGLE RANCH

**E**ARLY one morning a train from the east went puffing into a little town on the western prairie. It stopped only long enough to drop a few passengers. Then the bell clanged and it swept on across stretches of sand and sage brush. A young mother and her little boy and girl were left standing upon the platform. They looked in every direction as though expecting some one to meet them.

“Air yuh a-lookin’ for somebody?” asked the station agent.

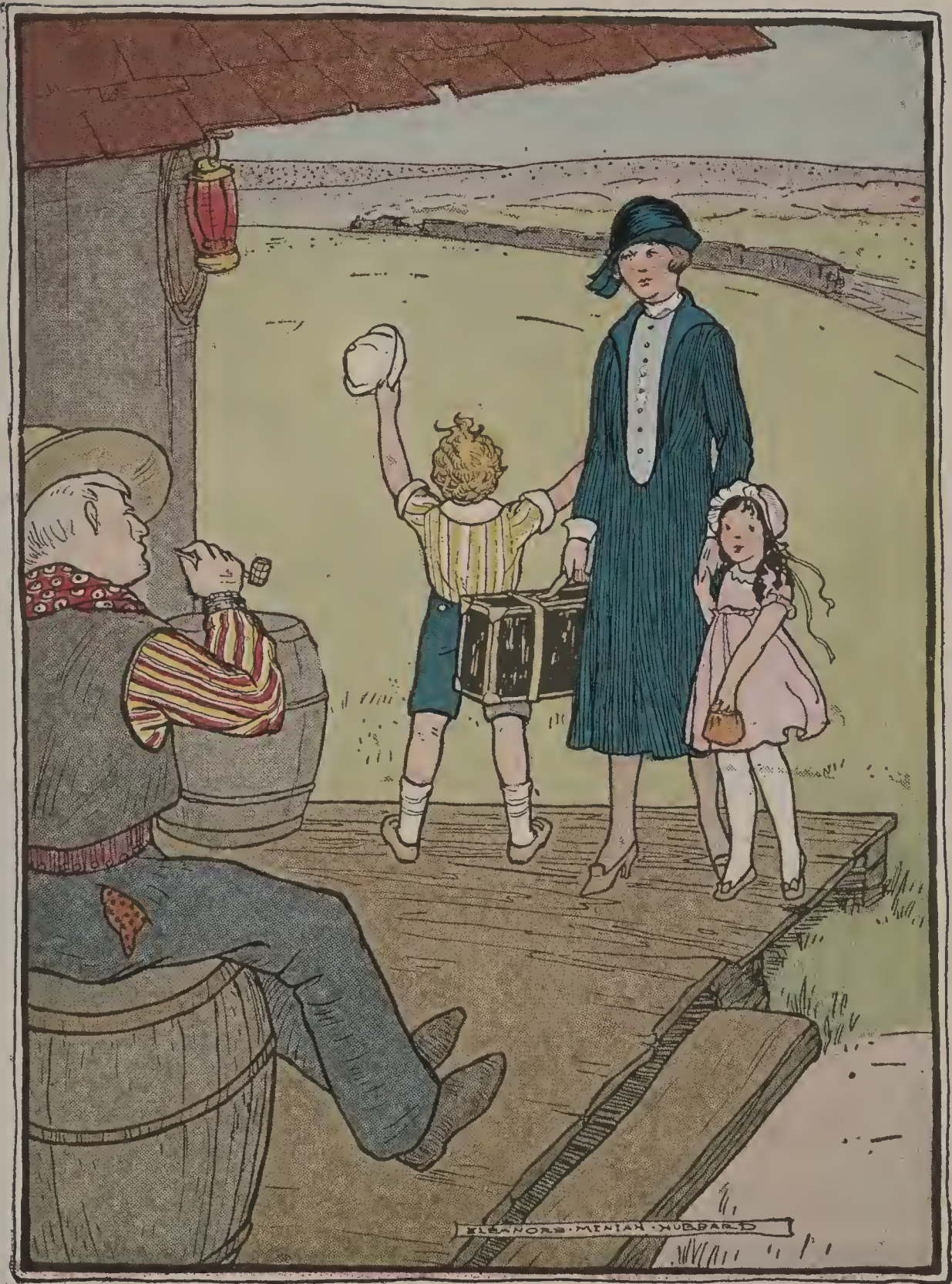
## EAGLE RANCH

“I’m looking for my brother, James Foote,” replied the woman.

“Wall,” said the agent, “I knows him. I reckon he’s Big Jim o’ Lower Camp.”

Brother Jim did not arrive, but a man was found who could be hired to take them over to Lower Camp. It was late when they reached the little log cabin where Big Jim Foote lived. No one was at home, but the door was open. “Everything’s free out here when a man’s hungry,” remarked the driver. “It’s the rule of the land. You eat and sleep, but before you leave you wash up the dishes. Perhaps the owner is doing the same in another camp.”

He hunted through the shelves and found milk, beans, flour and bacon for their supper.





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“Big Jim’s round somewhere,” said he, when they had eaten. “He’ll be back to-night or to-morrow. So long!” His wagon rattled away over the prairie.

Along one side of the room were bunks containing fur robes and blankets. The young mother put the children into one of them and soon both were sound asleep. She then sat down upon the doorstep. It was a lonely place, far from every one. The stars were shining brightly and the wind was singing a soft song in the wild grass at her feet, for it was springtime on the prairie. At last she heard the beat of horse’s hoofs and the bark of a dog. Some one rode up on horseback, took off bridle and saddle and set the horse free. It was Big Jim.

“Gladys!” he exclaimed. “Where did you

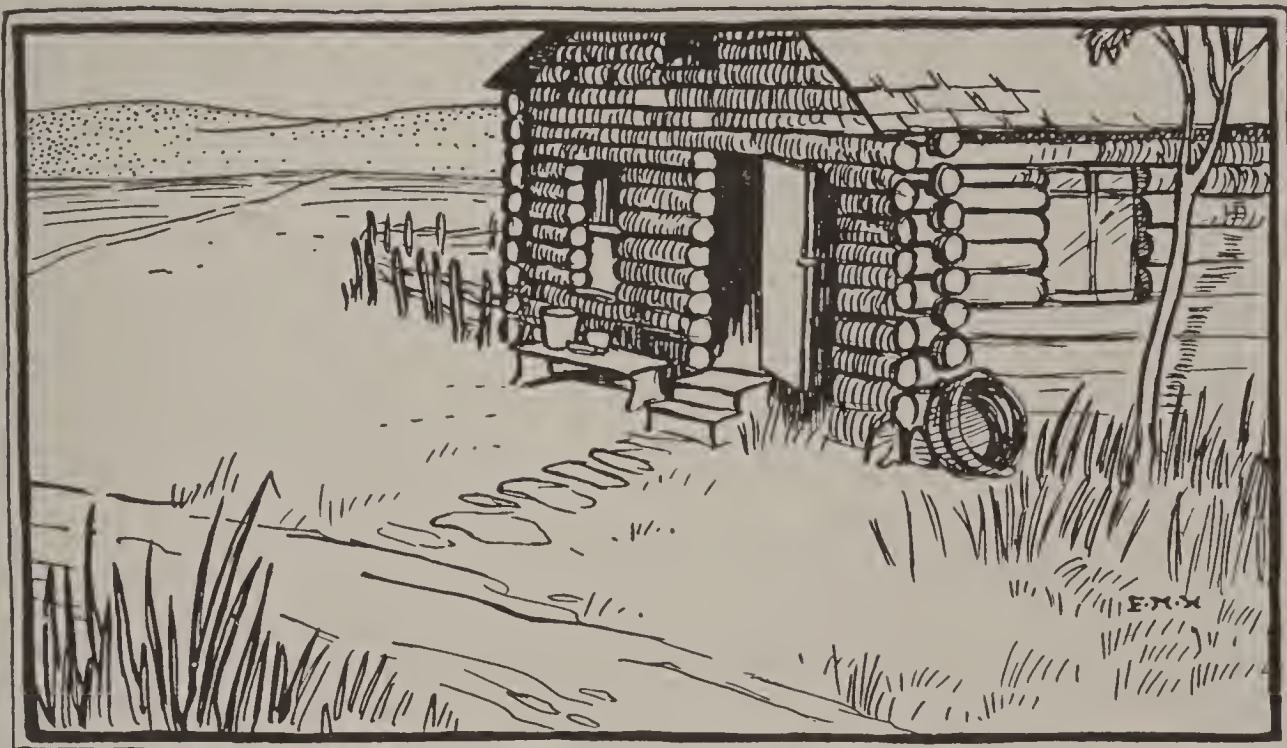


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come from? How did you get here? Why didn't you let me know?"

"I wrote," said Gladys.

"Letters don't come very fast, out here,"



said Big Jim. "But I am glad to see you. How are the children?"

"The children are asleep," returned Gladys, with a nod towards the bunk.

"Are the children here, too? Now that's

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fine! We'll have a great time together!" They talked late, then slipped into their bunks and fell asleep.

\* \* \* \*

Taters, Billy Sunshine, Mother Gladys and Big Jim were returning from town. Taters and Billy Sunshine were not the children's real names. Back in the east they were called William and Carla May, but it hadn't taken them any longer to find new names in this new country than it had taken Uncle Jim. Billy Sunshine seemed to exactly fit the smiling face and happy soul of little William.

One day Mother Gladys said, "Carla May *must* have potatoes!"

"Taters it is!" cried Big Jim, and from that moment she was 'Taters.' "





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Their trunk, which had been delayed, was now in the wagon, with many boxes of cans and a sack of potatoes. They were only a few miles from home when Big Jim drew up the reins and the horses came to a sudden stop. Near them was a patch of something red hidden in the grass. Uncle Jim knew at once what it was.

“There’s a new born calf!” he said. “Its mother has gone for water; she may be miles away. She has told it not to move until she returns. Do you want to see how a baby calf minds its mother?” He threw the lines to Sheppe, the dog. Sheppe caught them in his mouth and held the horses. Big Jim jumped out of the wagon and lifted the little calf up onto its feet. The minute he let go it fell back upon the ground and



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lay motionless as before. This it did several times.

“What a cunning baby calf!” cried Taters, when she was lifted out of the wagon.

“Its hair is like silk,” said Billy Sunshine.

“It has pretty brown eyes,” said Mother Gladys.

The children played with the baby calf while supper was made ready. Then they all sat down upon the ground while Uncle Jim passed tin plates and cups and knives and forks. The children were hungry and handed their cups back for more milk, which Big Jim poured out of the cans. Taters was drinking her milk when something bumped into her arm. Down went the cup! Splash went the milk! Billy Sunshine burst into laughter. The little baby calf had struggled

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to its feet and made its way over to Taters. Its long wobbly legs were too new to be sure of themselves, so the baby calf fell right into Tater's lap.

"Ma-a-a!" it said as it looked up at her. Perhaps it thought its mother had forgotten to return and that Taters had come to take her place.

"You darling baby calf!" exclaimed Taters. "Can't we take it with us, Mother?"

"The mother cow will return," said Uncle Jim. "It's not old enough to eat from a dish. We'll come back in a day or two and see it again." They climbed into the wagon. Big Jim looked back. The baby calf was up on its wabbly legs trying to totter after them.

"It wants to come," said Taters. "It's





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trying to follow us.” Big Jim went back and laid the little calf down upon the ground. Again it tried to follow and again he laid it down. This time it seemed to remember what its mother had told it for it lay as quietly as when first discovered.

\* \* \* \*

“Where are all the cattle, Uncle Jim?” asked Billy Sunshine that night when they reached the ranch.

“They are out on the prairie eating grass. You shall see them some day. There are more than you can count.”

“Where did they all come from, Uncle Jim?”

“Cowboys brought them up from the south,” replied Uncle Jim. “They must go wherever there’s grass to eat and water to



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drink. The herders never leave them alone by day or night.”

Big Jim began to sing a song he had often sung when watching the cattle at night:

“Oh, graze along, dogies, and feed kinda  
slow, . . .

Lay down, little dogies<sup>1</sup>, lay down!”

“What are dogies?” asked Billy Sunshine.

“They are the cattle. We nickname everything around here,” said Uncle Jim. Then changing his tune to fit the spring day, he sang:

“Oh, the rapid beat  
Of my pony’s feet,  
On the sod as I speed along,  
Keeps living time  
To the ringing rhyme  
Of my rollicking cowboy’s song”<sup>2</sup>

*Note:*

- (1) Dogies—pronounced dō’gies.
- (2) Adapted from old Night Herding Song and The Cowboy’s Life, found in “Songs of the Cowboys,” by N. Howard Thorp.

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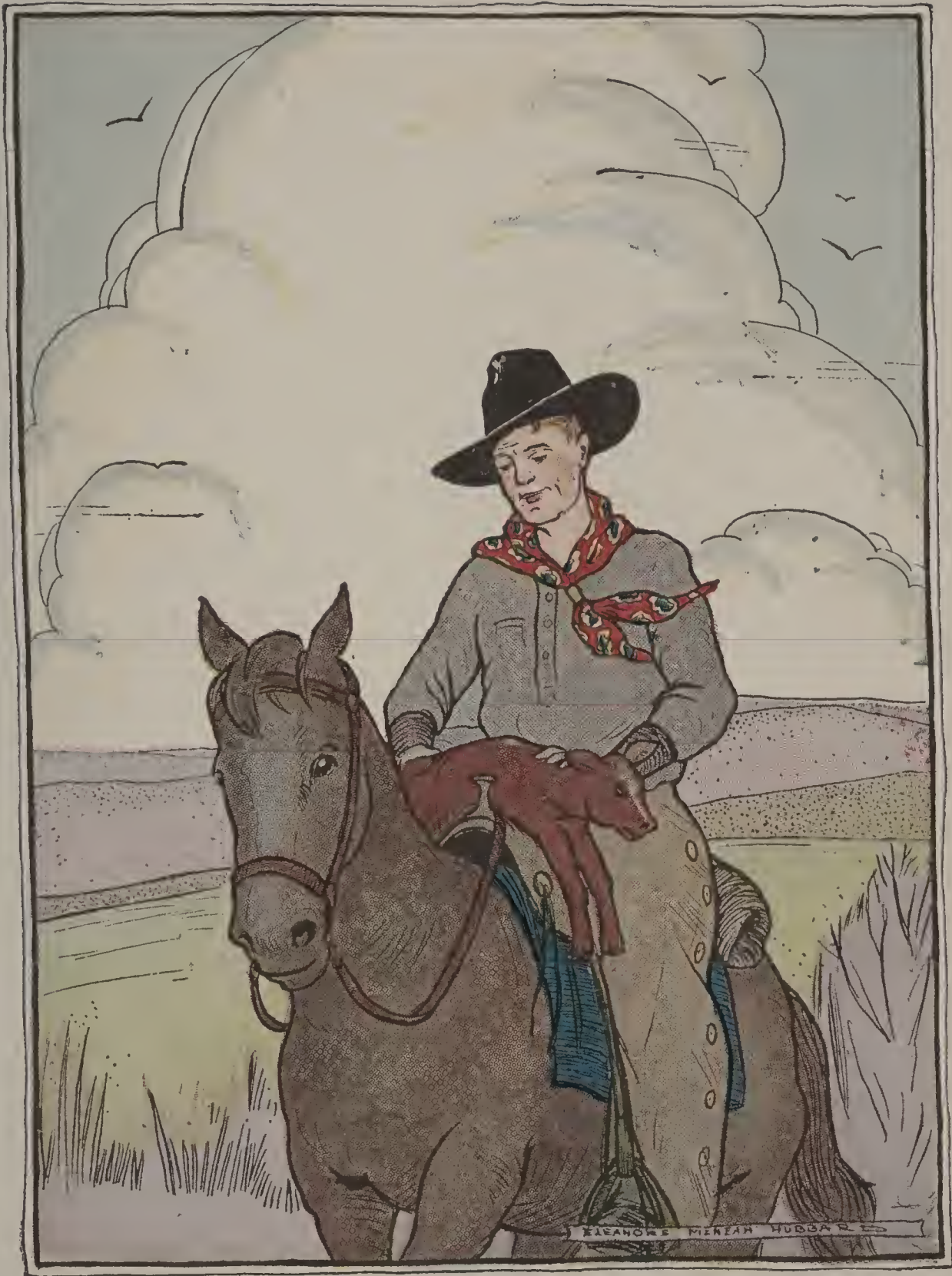
By this time Billy Sunshine and Taters were both dancing around him.

“Sing more, Uncle Jim, sing more!”

“I can’t sing!” said Big Jim, “excepting to the cows. Every cowboy sings to the cattle at night. It sort of quiets them and keeps them from running wild. Now, little ponies, good night! I’ll be out on the plains long before you are awake in the morning. Don’t expect me till you see me coming. A cowboy never knows when he will return to his cabin. His home is wherever his horse and saddle may be.”

“He called us ‘little ponies’!” said Taters, as they climbed into their bunk. “Isn’t Uncle Jim funny!”

In spite of what Big Jim had said, the children were watching for him before the





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afternoon was half over. There was a little creek with smooth stones in which to wade, blue violets to be gathered along its edges, and yellow buttercups out on the prairie. Nevertheless they missed Uncle Jim.

Billy Sunshine was the first to see him coming.

“Uncle Jim! Uncle Jim!” he shouted.

“Uncle Jim is bringing something,” said Mother Gladys. Sure enough! The reins were thrown loosely over the saddle horn, and across the saddle Big Jim was carrying the little red calf.

“Its mother has not returned,” he said. “The little calf couldn’t live alone out there. We’ll have to feed it.”

Uncle Jim opened a can and poured the milk into a pan with a little warm water.



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Then dipping two fingers in the milk he coaxed the little calf to lick the milk from his fingers. In this way it was fed until it learned to drink by itself.

“What shall we call her?” asked Mother Gladys.

“Why not call her Barbee?” suggested their Uncle. “I saw the mother cow a few days ago and she was marked with a Bar B.” (——B)

“What is that,” asked Billy Sunshine.

“Every owner has a special mark for his cows, out here on the prairie, for they must all feed together and that is his only way of knowing them.”

“Then who does Barbee belong to?” asked Billy Sunshine.

“She belongs to the man who marks his

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cows Bar B. But never mind, she's ours for as long as she needs our care, and that will be for a long time."

Big Jim thought no more about the matter. There were many calves on the prairie and the cattle kept him busy most of the time. Billy Sunshine did not forget.

"Don't grow fast, little Barbee," he said to her one day, "or you will grow away from us."

Barbee soon learned to follow the children wherever they went. When they ran she was close behind them. When they sat on the ground she would frisk about them. Sometimes they made chains of yellow flowers and hung them about her neck.

"Does Barbee like butter?" asked Taters, holding the buttercups under her chin. No





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yellow spot appeared as it did under their chins, and yet one day they found that Barbee liked butter. They had taken some sandwiches down by the creek for their lunch.

“Let’s fix a table,” said Taters, “and gather flowers in my apron. When we take the sandwiches out we can put the flowers in the pail.”

They gathered the flowers and returned. No pail was to be seen.

“Who has taken our lunch?” they cried.

Mother Gladys came out.

“Where’s Barbee?” she asked.

They found Barbee behind some bushes. She had rolled the pail until the cover had come off, and was licking the butter from the sandwiches.

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“Barbee likes butter! Barbee likes butter!” shouted the children as they clapped their hands. “She’s a bread-and-butter calf!” At least her little nose was all butter, and Mother Gladys had to go in and make more sandwiches for the children.

\* \* \* \*

“Billy Sunshine,” said Big Jim one day, “some of the boys from Upper Camp are coming over to-day. We’ll show you what a cowboy can do.”

“Will they have guns?” asked Billy Sunshine.

“No. They’re not likely to,” said their Uncle. “You haven’t seen me wearing one. They used to carry them to protect their cattle, but there are very few bears or wolves around now.”

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“What will the boys do?” asked Billy.

“You’ll see!” said Uncle Jim.

“Will Mother and I see too?” asked Taters.

“Of course,” laughed Big Jim. “It’s a surprise for all of you.”

“Suppose we surprise Uncle Jim,” said Mother Gladys, when they were left alone. “I have heard him say their cooks never make pies which are good to eat. Their pie crust is like leather. I wonder how the boys would like some nice fresh pies?”

“Oh, Mother!” said Billy Sunshine. “We’ll have a real surprise!”

Along in the middle of the afternoon they heard a shout. Five cowboys rode up on their ponies, among them Big Jim. They all wore broad felt hats, flannel shirts open at the neck, and chaps of leather. Their





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boots were small, with high heels that kept them from slipping too far into the stirrups. Each cowboy wore a handsome leather belt about his waist and a bright silk handkerchief loosely knotted around his neck. From his saddle hung a coiled rope.

“Sandy Pete will show you how a cowboy rides,” said Uncle Jim.

In a moment Sandy Pete was standing up in his stirrups while his pony raced across the prairie. Back came the horse, but no rider was to be seen.

“Where is Sandy Pete?” asked Taters.

“Oh, I see!” said Billy Sunshine. “He is underneath the horse!”

As he came near, Sandy Pete drew himself up onto the saddle and his horse came to a sudden stop.

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“This is the way we catch a horse,” said Uncle Jim.

He swung the rope round and round in lazy circles. Sandy Pete’s horse started off on a run. Then a slight twist of the hand—and the rope was around the four legs of the horse, rider and all. The horse stopped instantly. Next he caught two horses as they raced by. Then they all began spinning ropes, jumping back and forth in them as they went. Sandy Pete stood on his head and lassoed Big Jim’s pony as it passed him on the run.

“Do you want to see me catch that calf?” he asked, nodding toward Barbee.

“That would be no trick!” replied Big Jim. “Taters and Billy Sunshine can catch that calf just running the other way, or



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rather, the calf catches them. It belongs to a Bar B cow."

"Who is the winner?" asked Mother Gladys.

"Big Jim."

"No, Curley Austin!"

"Bear Cat Tom!"

"Taters and Billy Sunshine," shouted Sandy Pete, "for they can catch a calf without trying!"

"You are all winners!" said Mother Gladys. "Here are the prizes," and she brought out the pies.

"That's the best chuck ever served to a cowboy," said Sandy Pete, when they had eaten the pies, to which they all agreed.

"We'll see you the first of the week," said Bear Cat Tom. "There'll be lots of calves

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to mark this year. So long!" They were gone.

\* \* \* \*

"What are you thinking about, Billy Sunshine?" asked Big Jim. "Are you homesick?"

Billy Sunshine smiled faintly.

"No, Uncle Jim."

"You don't want to go home?"

"Not yet, Uncle Jim."

What Billy Sunshine was really thinking about was the round-up when the calves would all be marked. Then Barbee would wear the owner's mark on her side as well as in her name. Billy Sunshine didn't want to lose Barbee, and like some other little children, he hadn't learned to tell his troubles to those who could help him.

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The day of the round-up came. Big Jim left long before daylight. Billy Sunshine heard him going, but did not call out as usual. Later in the morning Billy Sunshine and Taters went out to play. There was Barbee waiting for them.

“Uncle Jim must have forgotten Barbee,” said Billy Sunshine to himself. “But he will take her to-morrow. A real cowboy is always honest and gives a calf back to its owner whether the owner knows about it or not. Uncle Jim said so.”

He was glad Uncle Jim was that kind of a man, but he did not want Barbee to go.

The next morning Uncle Jim failed to take Barbee again—and the next. Billy Sunshine could stand it no longer.

“When is Barbee going, Uncle Jim?”



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“Going where?”

“Back to her owner, the man who marks his cows Bar B.”

“Oh, Barbee isn’t going,” said Uncle Jim.



“I’ve given the man another calf in her place. He was perfectly willing to exchange. Barbee’s ours.”

A few years later, Taters, Billy Sunshine

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and Mother Gladys again visited their uncle at Lower Camp.

“Oh! Here is Barbee!” exclaimed Taters, as she threw her arms around a little red calf.

“No,” said Uncle Jim, “that isn’t Barbee. That’s Buttercup, Barbee’s calf. Barbee is waiting down by the creek. She wants to give you warm milk for your supper.”





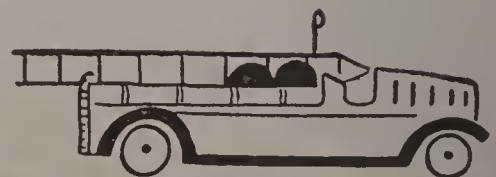
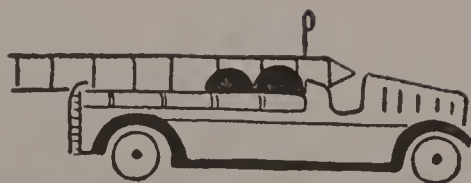
















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