To My Prospective Readers

I hope to put my stories before you without using any twenty-five cent words which might give you the false impression that I am filled with superior education.

I have two ambitions; one is to make a few small dollars and the second is to please you enough at the same time so that you will buy my next story also. The book is compact in size to fit your hip pocket, your purse, or a pocket in your space suit.

If the stories please you tell your friends, if not, give them to your worst enemy and knock him into a loop.

Your Friend,

MERLE G. CHADBOURNE

Harmony, Maine

This is a fiction story for your entertainment.

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HARMONY, MAINE

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AN EVENING AT LOST POND

THE CAMPFIRE blazed cheerfully as the evening darkness fell on the shore of Lost Pond in Maine.

Two young guides were preparing supper.

Two hours previous they had come in by plane for a few days’ fishing at this isolated point far from civilization.

The small tent was ready for the night, and inside a bough bed covered with blankets looked inviting.

Two brothers, Archie and Ivan Chadbourne, sat cross-legged near the glowing flames watching the coffee pot and a big spiderful of trout nearly ready to eat.

“This is one of the times when we should have ‘Dad’ here to spin yarns about his ‘Uncle Elick’,” remarked Archie.

“Horsefeathers,” scoffed Ivan. “‘Dad’s’ Uncle Elick stretched the truth more than once and I think ‘Dad’ always kept on giving him a lift.”

“I am not so sure,” replied Archie. “Queer things used to happen in Maine and maybe
there was more truth in those yarns than we think.”

“Holy machinaw, Ivan, do you see what I see coming to supper?”

“Reckon I do,” gasped Ivan, as his hand seemed to become welded to the spider handle.

“It’s a bear!!”

Overhead in a tall pine an owl let out a querilous “Whoo, Whoo.” A couple of bats with shadowy wings flitted by in the thickening darkness. A partridge nearby took off with a nerve-shaking whir of wings. Near the shore a big trout surfaced and came down with a splash. A big bullfrog gave out a surprized “kerchug” and plunked into the water.

Archie sat with bulging eyes as the bear lumbered ahead toward the fire.

A dry limb snapped under its foot with a pistol-like report, and Archie felt moisture squeezing out of the metal handle of the coffee pot as he gripped it tighter.

The two young guides were in a tight spot. Both guns were in the tent and not even loaded. The axe was twenty feet away stuck in a block of wood. Their hunting knives
were near the axe where the fish had been cleaned. They were at least fifty miles from any help. Cold sweat formed on their foreheads and started down in icy trickles.

And then, as the bear took another step forward with eyes gleaming in the firelight, one of those unexpected little whirlwinds tore around and around a small scrub oak which still held onto some of last season's leaves, causing them to rustle frantically like a cluster of lost souls struggling to get free.

Like a picture, every detail of their lives that had occurred flashed in the minds of the two young guides and also how convenient it would be to look at this scene also instead of being there.

What chance could they stand against a four hundred pound bear with bare hands. The outcome did not seem to be in doubt.

The powerful form coming at them stood over six feet tall and the forearms seemed as big as a man's leg bulging with muscles. It had only taken three steps toward them and just as it seemed they could stand no more, the bear opened its mouth and let
loose a roaring peal of laughter which echoed far across the pond.

Then, as the young fishermen gaped in amazement, the bear again roared out peal after peal of laughter, drumming its stomach with tremendous thumps of its fists, sending out great booming noises like a man hitting an empty cider barrel with a sledge hammer. Then, with a friendly grin, it came closer and gave each guide a light pat on the shoulder, saying, “relax and take it easy. I just came to visit you young fellows as I happened to hear you mention ‘Uncle Elick’.”

“You may not believe it, but your ‘Dad’ and your ‘Uncle Elick’ didn’t tell you half what they could have. Probably thought someone would think they were lying.

“Your ‘Uncle Elick’ brought me up from a cub and learned me to talk just like you can. Now, if you don’t mind, I’d like to sit down on this log by the fire while you eat your supper.”

“Sure, go ahead,” gasped the young guides. “Glad to know you; make yourself comfortable.”

Archie unlatched his hand from the handle
of the coffee pot and offered Bruin a dipperful.

"Sure will have some, and you can put in two spoons of sugar if you don't mind. Those trout sure smell good."

"That's right," replied Ivan. "Have a couple to go along with the coffee."

After supper Bruin sat back on the log with one leg crossed over the knee of the other and his back against the tree.

"Now, that is what I call a good meal, boys," he remarked as he reached out and picked up a splinter to pick his teeth.

"Never had a better one since Uncle Elick and I used to hunt together."

"Well," said Archie, "we are some relation to Uncle Elick and it sure is good to meet a friend of his; meet my brother Ivan and you already know my name, I guess."

"Sure," said Bruin with another friendly grin as he shook hands with the boys.

"My name is Abel Bruin. That's what Uncle Elick always called me, because I could always run the game to him. We had some great hunting together.

"I just wish you fellows could have been with us on one deer hunt I remember of."
We were out in December and started a big buck; both of us had snowshoes on. It happened down near Harmony, Maine, on Hanson Mountain.

"Around and around that mountain we chased that buck and at last when our snowshoes were most worn out we drove him into a field where they were haying and laid him low. That was some chase if I do tell it, boys, from December until July to get one deer, but your Uncle Elick never gave up once he got on a deer track. That was really a tough time for me because I never got a wink of sleep all winter long.

"Uncle said when we got home it was the last time he would ever chase a deer around a mountain and he went at it with the blacksmith tools and in a short time made a gun with a curved barrel to shoot around corners."

Ivan threw more wood on the campfire and the cheery blaze lighted up the campground.

"Tell us," said Archie, "what sort of a man was Uncle Elick?"

"Well," replied Bruin, "he was just an ordinary-looking farmer or woodsman about six feet tall; might have weight one hundred
eighty-five or so; brown, tanned features, light-colored hair, and eyes that seemed to look right through a person. At the time he picked me up in the woods he must have been about thirty-five years old.

“A tough man to tackle in a scrimmage.

“I remember, after I had grown up and weighed over two hundred pounds, one day I went into the henhouse and began sucking eggs. He caught me in the act good and proper. I tried to run but one of his powerful hands gripped the scuff of my neck and with a leather hame strap in the other, he larruped my bottom to a blister and I ate at the table standing up for two weeks.

“Uncle Elick served three years in the Civil War as a Sharpshooter, but at last a day came when a fellow on the other side drew a bead on his heart. The bullet missed its target and splintered the bone in Uncle’s upper left arm. The surgeon took the bone out at the shoulder and elbow. The arm got well after a long time and then Uncle Elick came back to the farm to live.

“He could lift with the left hand as well as ever except if he tried to lift it above his
head the arm would flap down like a dishrag.

“I had carried on the farm for him during the war. He and Aunt Mary had no children, you see, and I guess that’s why they looked after me while I was growing up.

“As I told you before, Uncle Elick learned me to talk like you can, and during the three years he was away Aunt Mary taught me to write and figure during the long winter evenings by candlelight. I would get pretty sleepy, but always before bedtime she would prepare a lunch of cornbread and milk, so I kept at it.”

“Tell me, was he a truthful man?” said Ivan.

“’Course he was,” chuckled Bruin.

“I often remembered he used to say to me, ‘Now Abel, always tell them the truth. They never will believe you but always do it’.”

As Archie added more wood to the cheery blazing campfire, an owl let out a wavering, croaky “Whoo, Whoo.”

“Go ahead, Abel,” said Ivan. “Tell us what you did when he got back. Archie and I will make coffee and fry some bacon and eggs for an evening lunch before we go to bed.”

“O. K., boys,” replied Bruin, “but if you
even tell the truth about this fishing trip people will believe you are trying to outdo your 'Dad' and Uncle Elick, both. I'll spin you the story soon as I get my old corncob pipe going."

The young guides' eyes goggled with surprise as Bruin tamped a pipeful carefully and lighted it with a glowing splinter from the fire.

As he leaned back against the tree and blew out a tremendous cloud of smoke, a grizzled old porcupine that had crept closer to listen, gave a choking snort and began walking backwards.

"Guess the old pipe is getting a bit rugged," chuckled Abel.

"Now, after Uncle Elick got back home this is what happened."

All was silent for a moment or two except for the cheerful snapping of the blazing campfire.

The bats hung straight down from the tree limbs overhead. The eels came up from the bottom of the pond and laid their heads on the shore to listen. A pair of coons ambled over to one side of the fire and sat down side by side. A hoarse, rasping kerchug came from
a big bullfrog and all the little frogs stopped their peeping. A big buck and a beautiful doe walked up near the boys and laid down nearby. The big bullfrog hopped from the pond to a spot near the blaze and sat down with a friendly croak of greeting. A pair of squirrels joined the company and sat quietly on a limb as they shelled beechnuts to eat.

The old owl coasted silently to a limb nearby, outlined in the moonlight, and watched with the expression of a wise old judge. A rabbit hopped closer and sat with its ears straight up to listen. Several little chickadees moved impatiently with little chirping noises as if asking Bruin to hurry up. The trout in the pond nearby were standing on their tails; the stars twinkled overhead, and the high riding moon looked down with one eye half closed in cheerful wink.

"Archie!" said Ivan, "for the love of old Pete, just pinch me. I want to know if this is real."

Bruin gave a hearty laugh, saying, "You are both awake all right, you are just seeing some of what can go on in the Maine woods at night. Our company here knows what
friendship with one another means. Also they like my story-telling.

"The first winter after Uncle got home was a quiet one for me as he took over the chores and Aunt Mary was happy to have him home again. I dug a snug nest in the haymow and slept from December until the next April.

"Then Uncle Elick came out one sunshiny morning and gave me a light prod with the pitchfork, saying, 'get up, Abel, it's time we should start getting ready for planting'.”

A slight rustle in the leaves on the ground told of the approach of another visitor and the young guides gasped with surprise as an old mud turtle came puffing and panting into the firelight.

"I was pretty deep down in the mud when I heard Uncle Elick's name mentioned,” he chuckled, “but I rushed right over to the party. Didn't even take time to doll myself up and came just as I was.

"Guess I'll stand over here near this fire and warm my belly a bit. It is a little cool for me to be out so early in the season; the ice has only been out a couple of days.”

"Well, boys,” continued Bruin, “from the
time Uncle Elick woke me up that spring, things were pretty lively around the old farm.

"We put out a good line of muskrat traps around Mainstream Pond near Harmony, Maine, got a lot of them and had roasted muskrat meat for weeks. The hides would bring ten to fifteen cents apiece then, and it brought in a little ready cash.

"Tapped some maple trees and made maple syrup. Then we plowed, and harrowed with the old spike tooth and put in corn and beans, a few potatoes and a nice garden.

"The roofs needed shingling so we went at them. Put on good old hand-shaved cedar shingles that I had worked out in spare time while Uncle was in the service. He had a pair of woodpeckers trained so well that they drove in all the nails fast as I could lay the shingles. They seemed to enjoy doing it and the rat-tat-tat bang! As the nails went in it made music in the air. Uncle Elick was busy as a beaver bringing the bunches of shingles up the ladder to us.

"He seemed to have a knack for turning most everything into goods or money.

"Several years before leaving home to act
as Sharpshooter in the war he had built the whole set of farm buildings right from the foundations up. Even made the bricks for the fireplaces, brick oven and chimney.

“He seemed to turn the most unexpected things to use; we saved the livers from the muskrats and salted them down in the cellar along with all the eel skins we could get. Then early in the fall we would dump them into the big thirty-gallon iron kettle, fill it most full of water and start a fire going under it. After it had boiled down to about five gallons, he would turn in two or three gallons of boiled cider, a gallon of elderberry wine and two quarts of chloroform. Then we would put it up in bottles and jugs to use for coughs and colds during the winter. Everyone around seemed to like it and it always seemed to make a cure, but I often wondered what made everyone who used it have such a queer faraway look in their eyes.

“For the ladies, who complained of headache and jittery nerves, we made a tonic out of old rusty iron, honey, and the parings from the horses’ hoofs, cedar boughs, and fir pitch, all boiled down in water from a start of thirty gallons to the finished prod-
uct of about five gallons when it was simmered down low. After straining the liquid that remained he would add two gallons of elderberry wine, give it a good stirring up with an old rusty gun barrel and we would bottle it up.

“He always had a supply of cobwebs for bad cuts and a good reserve supply of black muck for hornet and bee stings.

“Uncle Elick picked up quite a bit of medical know-how and rough and ready surgery while in the army. I remember once a man was brought to the farm with a broken leg. There was no ether or chloroform handy. He was afraid it was going to hurt too bad while it was being set.

“‘Never give it a thought,’ Uncle Elick said, ‘you won’t know anything about it,’ and he clouted the patient on the head with a pick handle. When the fellow woke up the leg was all set. Two bed slats tied on for splints and he was home in bed.

“Uncle said there were some cases where one had to use what was called a counter-irritant. I’d heard of it before but never until that time did I know it was also called a pick handle.
“Well, boys, that same fellow always stood up for Uncle Elick, saying no one could beat him at doctoring and always came to the farm whenever a tooth needed pulling. Uncle did not have much to work on teeth with except a pair of pinchers such as all blacksmiths use, a coarse file or rasp and a knife that was generally used in paring down horses’ hoofs. But he always said proudly that it was a pretty rugged tooth that he couldn’t take out inside of three hours.

“I remember one old farmer who had come to the farm regular for tooth pulling; was down to Bangor visiting and had to go to a dentist on Exchange Street in a hurry. The dentist squirted a little dope around the tooth, pulled it out and the old fellow didn’t even know it. He asked what the bill was and when the dentist told him three dollars, went roaring, fighting mad, tore up the shop, blacked the dentist’s eyes and then brushing his hands, shouted, ‘you can’t rob me that way, three dollars for three minutes’ work. You must think I’m foolish!! Why, you miserable blackguard, I had a tooth pulled by Uncle Elick up in Harmony a week ago and he pulled and dragged me all over the black-
smith shop for two hours, and only charged me twenty-five cents!"

"Those were the good old days," chuckled Bruin, as he refilled the old corncob pipe and lighted it with a glowing brand from the campfire. After letting out a tremendous puff of smoke, which caused the old porcupine to snort with disgust, Abel Bruin settled back comfortably by the fire and continued.

"Things went along good and haying time came. I remember one day we had two loads to get in and the weather looked like a big thunder shower was coming. Just as we were hustling to get into the field after it, a long, lean, lanky fellow came limping into the dooryard. He was about six and a half foot tall with cowhide boots on that came up to his knees. Said he had a corn on one of his little toes that was bothering terrible and wanted Uncle Elick to do something for it right off. Made an offer to help get in the hay if Uncle could ease it up. We needed help bad, so out to the shop we went.

"I put a steel poker in the fire to heat, then we went at undressing his foot. Generally it would take two men and a bootjack
half an hour to get one of those old cowhides off a man’s foot at night, but we were in a hurry and did it in less than fifteen minutes.

“Then we had him put his foot on the chopping block so we could look at it. Just then the corn began to bother him terribly and he looked up towards the roof saying to Uncle, ‘For the love of Mike, do something quick!’ Uncle Elick was always a tender-hearted man and he couldn’t deny a piteous plea like that. Quickly he placed a sharp chisel on top of the toe and walloped it with a sledge hammer. The severed toe snapped across the shop against the wall taking the corn with it.

“The fellow let out a yowl that seemed to start the shingles off the roof, then he took a flying leap out the door and went down the road in a cloud of dust. Didn’t even stop to thank us or help get the hay in.

“Uncle Elick was kind of peeved all that afternoon; said there were some people you could try to help and they would never appreciate it.

“And now, boys, I have told you a little bit about Uncle Elick, which is only the beginning of a lifetime of strange adventures
in Maine. If you are up on the sunny side of Mt. Katahdin this summer we may meet again and I will really spin you some yarns you will have hard work to believe. Good night and good fishing. We must all go now.”

“Well,” Archie remarked, “Ivan, if we ever tell about this evening what are we going to be called?”

“Two of the biggest storytellers in Somerset County,” chuckled Archie, “that’s what we will be, but I am beginning to believe that ‘Dad’ knows more about Maine which he has not told us yet.”
Why the People Live on the Edge of Wellington Township

The young fellows told me when they returned home about their experience that evening. The story did not surprise me any because my Uncle Elick's well-known and talked about from Harmony to Starks.

He was the only farmer who ever raised thirty bushels of yellow-eyed beans on a quarter acre of land, threshed them out by hand and put them all into two flour barrels. No one ever doubted his statement that they were in the two barrels for anyone to see, because they knew well enough any one who raised thirty bushels of beans on a quarter acre of land wouldn't lie about the barrels.

Uncle Elick and Uncle Bob were near neighbors, always trying to outdo each other and telling about their adventures, in the local store or in front of the fireplaces in their homes.

Uncle Bob was a brawny six-footer, a powerful man to tackle, and when he was
telling stories in the country store at Mainstream it was an event to remember.

After getting in a good chew of tobacco and well seated on a nail keg, he would always spit a stream of tobacco juice on the side of the old box stove. That part was nothing unusual for anyone to do in those days, but Uncle Bob was also a powerful spitter, and every time he did it there would be a new dent in the cast iron.

I got a chance to buy the stove in later years for a dollar and still have it upstairs here (it's not for sale). You can see the dents all over the sides as if a swarm of .22 caliber bullets had been fired at it.

Those were the days when a gill of whiskey, brandy, or gin only cost three cents and vitamins were not on the market.

In the summer there were benches on the platform outside the store for the customers to sit on and plenty of shingles to whittle as they talked over the local news and swapped everything from jackknives to horses. Within a twenty-mile circle of Harmony there were over eighty Civil War veterans who had served in the Twentieth Maine and all had marks to prove it.
When half a dozen met at the store it was an interesting place to be although they seldom talked about the war. Sometimes late in the evenings the terrible crime committed on the nearby mountain in the section called "Rockee Dundee" would be discussed in hushed tones as they told of Old Betsy and how she knocked her husband senseless with a two-pound iron breadspoon with a two-foot handle and the horrible act she committed afterwards; and how she went to Grass Valley, California, in the Gold Rush and might come back, with revenge in mind, if she knew anyone talked about it.

Everyone had moved out of Rockee Dundee and the place was supposed to be haunted. Even today no one lives there and only a few stonewalls mark the place.

At other times they would talk about the farmer who lived in the edge of the Town of Wellington, Maine, who was one of the first to be operated on for "pencitis," as they called it. Once in a while he would be in the store with them and tell how the doctor laid him out on the old kitchen table in the farmhouse, assisted by the hired man
and hired girl. How they got him fogged up with ether and went to work.

When the job was half done he woke up, half his guts were out on the table, the hired girl was fooling with the hired man and the doctor was figuring up in a notebook how he would spend the fifteen dollars he got for the operation. They pounced on him before he got off the table, gave him more ether and next time he came to the job was done and he was all sewed up.

Next day the doctor drove into the doorway all fussed up and in a terrible hurry. Said he forgot his scissors and sewed them up inside the cut! Wanted to open things up again and get them out right off quick because he had a customer who needed a hair cut and another farmer needed some sheep-shearing done.

He changed his mind a moment later and got out the door in time to escape a blast from a double-barreled shotgun as he galloped down the road in a cloud of dust.

The hired man wasn't so lucky and passed the doctor hanging onto the seat of his pants perforated with birdshot.

Two weeks later the patient married the
hired girl. Said he couldn’t afford to pay a dollar a week to have housework done when he could marry her and get it done for nothing.

Those were the days of big timber and sawmills with up and down saws instead of circular saws, and logs fifty to sixty feet long and six feet in diameter were easily put through the mill run by water power.

Nearly all the heavy timbers for barns and houses were hand-hewed on the building spot, as the roads were only roads in the making stage except in winter.

In the period I am writing about any respectable bull could earn his living at home right in his own barnyard.

The horseflies lived a carefree, happy life; they were plump and contented.

The houseflies could leave the hot stuffy kitchens and go outside for a vacation and eat their fill on the strings of dried apples on the sunny sides of the farmhouses.

The hornets could do handsprings on the rim of the old swill pail and any melancholy rat or mouse could quietly commit suicide by jumping into the pickle barrel down cellar.

The butter could stand up for itself with-
out any advertising. The beans could talk and the moose, deer and bears lived in the woods the year around. Every farmer owned a buffalo fur overcoat, an umbrella and a wheelbarrow. The boys had so much surplus energy that they often threw the school teachers outdoors for exercise. During the long summer vacation the boys didn’t have their noses to the grindstone; they had hold of the handle while their fathers or the hired man bore down with both feet and hands to keep the stone from turning too fast.

The calves knew who their father was and the mother cows didn’t see their defenseless daughters grow up to be raped by a well-dressed man who drives into the yard in a shiny automobile while she is helpless and tied up by the neck in the barn.

Now the calves can’t say mamma and if you ask one who his father was he will probably just hang his head down and blat. Science has beaten the bulls out of their business now, and I would not be a bit surprised to hear that the Government was going to erect a billion-dollar home any day
now for retired bulls to live out their last sorrowful days.

The horsefly nowadays has a worn, haggard look on his face as he buzzes around the tractor in the fields and then drops dead from starvation.

The squirrels break their teeth off trying to collect nuts from automobiles and the proud, hard-working woodpecker bangs away noisily on the oil drums and bends his pecker into a fishhook.

A man in Uncle Elick's times could carry around a buckskin pouch with a rawhide drawstring in the top and look anyone straight in the face if the pouch was bulging with twenty dollar gold pieces. Now if you had even a five dollar gold piece you would have to go around sneakily like a hen thief.

The people in those times were backwards I guess, they dug out rocks and put up stone-walls in order to clear more land to raise crops on, and now in our more enlightened times the method is to add to the taxes to pay the farmer not to use the land. Just like cutting a slice off one side of your rumps to ease up the smart on the other side.

The educated ones claim that a bumblebee
shouldn't be able to fly but the poor stupid thing doesn't pay any attention and just keeps on flying just the same. The mosquitoes nowadays are scrawny weaklings, half starved and singing a melancholy refrain as they stagger hopelessly around Wellington Bog searching for a place to lay their aching heads.

The times of Uncles Elick and Bob things were different.

The ancestors of those poor weaklings were burly brutes, rugged and sassy, six inches between the eyes, and twelve to fourteen hands high. Thirty-five to fifty pounds apiece barefooted they tipped the scales, and if a woodsman forgot and left his cantdog in the woods overnight, some of the younger ones would get around it and drill half-inch holes through the rock maple stock, just for exercise.

If an oxyoke or a set of logging sleds were left near that Bog in the summer the wood was soon perforated like a seive with big drill holes where the big old rugged mosquitoes gave boring lessons to the younger ones.

Everyone settled in the edge of Welling-
ton Township; none dared try the middle where the bog was, and for a hundred years or more the big mosquitoes held it against all comers until one day Uncle Elick decided to give them a try.
Helen Blazes Gets Kicked Out of Wellington

It was at the time Uncle Elick, joined by Uncle Bob, were making their preparations for their perilous expedition that the hired girl Helen Blazes, who married Ezikia, "Kiah" for short, the one who was operated on for "pencitis," got ideas in her head.

A lightning rod and dung spreader salesman came to town and stopped at the farm two weeks. He was a new product to land in a pioneer settlement at that early date. A nice, lively stepping horse hitched onto a shiny red wagon equipped with a black and gold-trimmed whip socket and a sporty-looking whip setting in it trimmed with blue and gold ribbon tied in a six-inch bowknot was part of his outfit.

The salesman had a well-waxed handlebar moustache, a plump little belly, ornamented with a black vest and double-looped gold watch chain, one end attached to a gold-cased watch, big enough to make a fistful. A nice broadcloth suit and derby hat went along well with his black hair, keen blue
eyes, and friendly expression. He weighed about one hundred and fifty pounds, shoes and all. Thirty-five years would have taken in his age easily.

The first day he arrived at Kiah’s he complimented everything in sight, even to a spavined old mare doubled up with the heaves. Then he did a little horse doctoring by shoving a handful of buckshot down her throat and bathing the spavin with Kikapoo Indian Sagwa Liniment. The heaving stopped and inside of twenty minutes she was capering around the dooryard like a colt!

Helen and Kiah fell for him and fell real hard.

They contracted right away for six lightning rods and a spreader. They fed him on the choicest food they could get: baked muskrat, roasted porcupine and venison. After a week Kiah even chopped the head off an old turkey gobbler that had roosted over the well for five years, and served it up with all the trimmings.

The salesman took orders everywhere he went for twenty miles around. He was very careful to keep the horse well fed and groomed. After a week of it Kiah began to
think he would have to buy a new currycomb and brush. Helen would hold the lantern late in the evenings to help out also.

Kiah didn’t suspect a thing until one morning he overslept his usual time, and found them both all packed and ready to climb into the wagon to drive off.

He had only one cowhide boot on but he lifted the salesman on his way with two rugged kicks in the rear end and gave Helen a third one to remember him by in the same locality.

They went down the road out of Wellington like a whirlwind, while Kiah madly searched for buckshot to load his gun with.

There was little conversation while the two travelled through the County to Waterville where the salesman returned the horse and rig back to the livery stable.

As they climbed aboard the through train to Boston they did so with very careful movements and sat in the coach on the plush upholstered seats with great care.

As the train rolled along, Helen told him how she had worked in the hayfields and even as roller-on in the sawmill with a cant-dog. He should have paid more attention to
what she was telling him, but it did not seem to interest him at all. It was not much different until the train came within sight of the factory chimneys belching choking black smoke and stink, near Boston. Then he began to elaborate about the beauties of his hometown of Boston.

At North Station he bought a big cigar and with it cocked at a rakish angle in a corner of his mouth, he escorted her out of the crowded terminal and up Canal Street a short distance to a low-priced hotel over a liquor store. Taking along two bottles of whiskey he engaged a good room and they went upstairs.

The first drink of whiskey loosened his tongue and he began to curse everything in the country. Next he took off his coat and pants and lolled back on the bed and told her all about what a dumb-headed bunch of idiots the Maine farmers were. How he had got their signed contracts in his coat pocket and had not even given out a single duplicate copy, raised the amounts the contracts called for and that the next day he would turn them in at the factory and get over a thousand dollars in commissions.
Cockily he kept on bragging how he had trimmed people in other parts of the country and had five hundred dollars in his pants on the chair.

Helen listened with a cold, sickening feeling as she realized that most all those who signed the contracts would lose the money which years of stern toil had taken to accumulate.

On and on he went with it and at last he got off the bed with a slimy drool of whiskey coming out of one corner of his mouth and started to take her in his arms. She let him come, smiling in his face, as he lurched to her with his arms out. Then a hand with a grip like a vice closed on his throat and put a permanent dent into his Adams' Apple. Another closed on one of his legs with a grip which brought a shudder of pain surging all over him.

Hands and arms which have been used on big timber around a sawmill are not at all like the soft, trembling hands and arms he expected. Lifting him off the floor like a sack of meal, Helen threw him through the open second story window. There was no sound as he went down to land heels up in
what looked like an empty pork barrel in the back alley.

After dusting off her hands and giving her hair a few pats here and there, Helen put the salesman’s coat, vest and pants into her carpetbag along with her few belongings and stepped daintily downstairs and out onto Canal Street. She gave the hotel clerk a friendly wink as she passed through to the street, which caused him to wriggle in anticipation of what could happen later when she came back.

Her first stop was on Washington Street where she went into the Jordan and Marsh department store. It was a relief to get inside out of the sound of the wagons and heavy drays clattering along the street paved with stone, for this was long before the time of modern roads and automobiles. The roar of sound was making her ears ache.

Two hours later, the sunbonneted woman who entered the store, walked out, the long skirts and sunbonnet lying in a heap in a trash can inside.

If Buffalo Bill had been lucky enough to have been there he would have signed her up in short order. She wore a short skirt of
brown buckskin, heavily fringed, and a close-fitting jacket of the same material with fringed collar and sleeves, a shiny pair of cowboy boots with silver-plated spurs, the butt of a wicked-looking six-shooter sticking out of an ornamented holster at her hip hanging rakishly on a silver-trimmed belt.

Her flaming red hair had been trimmed and hung in a glowing shower down over her shoulders.

The old carpetbag had given way to a pair of serviceable saddlebags, which contained her belongings. In one hand she carried a blacksnake whip with a loaded handle. A porter brought out a well-made saddle and a cab driver took her to North Station.

An evening train soon pulled out of the terminal toward Maine, while Helen reposed sound asleep with her head on the saddlebags and the saddle on the floor of the coach beside her.

At Portland, Maine, there was a half-hour stop to give the passengers time for a lunch, and a check-up by the trainmen of the axles and boxes to see that none were heating. Then onward again toward Bangor.
The golden sun was peeping over the hills as they left Brunswick and rode along the beautiful Kennebec River through Richmond, Gardiner, and Augusta. A choking feeling came in her throat as she looked at the river outlined with tremendous pine and spruce trees, for she knew this might be her last chance to see such beauty made by the hand of nature.
Helen Returns to Wellington

At Waterville, Maine, she unloaded her dunnage from the train and an hour later purchased a good saddle horse for thirty-five dollars. Then at a hardware store she added to her equipment: two meal bags, one hundred pounds of dynamite in two fifty-pound wooden boxes, two hundred feet of fuse, and a small tin box containing one hundred dynamite caps. Two boxes of shells for her six-shooter went into the saddlebags. The small tin box of caps went into a breast pocket of her fringed jacket. A box of dynamite went into each meal bag.

Then, after roping the necks of the bags securely together, she hung them one on each side over a folded blanket back of the saddle. The fuse hung in a coil on the saddlehorn like a lariet.

Riding astride like a cowboy she went out of Waterville at an easy trot, gripping the loaded handle of the blacksnake whip in one hand. The regular roads were not for her; the back roads and trails were good enough as she travelled unerringly as a bee towards
Wellington and the farm she had been kicked from. Grimly, as the horse trotted along, she thought, I have a job to do and I will do it well.

About nine o’clock that evening, Helen drew her horse to a halt under a big pine tree, three or four hundred feet from the home place. After unloading the dynamite, and placing it along with the caps and fuse in a safe place nearby, well covered with the blanket, she continued on afoot toward the farmhouse.

At the spring nearby Helen drank thirstily from the gourd dipper which she dipped time after time in the clear, cool water flowing from a moss-covered barrel.

As she came near the house a large doe and fawn came to their feet under an apple tree and walked quickly away to the nearby forest. The old mare came across the door-yard to her with a low “nicker” of greeting and rubbed her nose against Helen’s shoulder. After giving the animal a few friendly pats on the neck, she walked quietly nearer the house.

Kiah had started haying; the Buckeye mowing machine was in front of the house
near the grindstone under the crabapple tree. The great barn doors were open and the smell of new-mown hay came to her as she stepped onto the kitchen porch.

Kiah sat at the kitchen table under the hanging kerosene lamp with his back towards her, picking over yellow-eyed beans. There was a heap of them on the table of perhaps a half a bushel. She saw by the mellow light that the woodbox was well filled, the usual sticks of cedar with a few shavings whittled up on the sides to start the morning fire were in the little kindling box. The wooden water pail sat brimming full on the shelf at the end of the wooden sink. His well-worn knee-length cowhide boots were beside the painted woodbox. A walnut-colored bootjack hung near the stove.

All was quiet except the rumblings of a fast approaching thunder shower sweeping down across that corner of Wellington township known as Zion! That section was so ledgey and rocky nothing would grow on it except ministers and sheep.

The parents of the boys would take them out in the fields at fourteen years of age and bump their bottoms on the rocks. If the
boy being tested didn't swear they knew for sure he would grow up to be a minister, and if he did swear he always turned into a sheepherder and had to hold the sheep up by their hind legs so they could feed between the boulders.

Through the screen door Helen could see that a pot of beans was on the far end of the cookstove, and in an iron kettle near it she knew there must be a steaming hot can of brown bread. Kiah always liked a meal of beans and brown bread late on a Saturday night. Until she saw the bean pot, Helen had given no thought to time. How could time have gone by so fast.

She turned from the door and saw the twenty-cord pile of stove wood heaped up by the long woodshed to dry in the sun until the first of September and then be tiered up in the shed to last through the long winter.

Under the eaves of the shed hung on heavy wooden pegs were the ox yokes, a sickle, a hand scythe, and several ox chains.

A shaving horse used for working out axe handles and hand-shaved shingles sat just inside the wide open front of the building.

Helen knew the hard hours of work re-
quired to do things on the farm. The years and years of labor with stone drag and oxen to put the stone walls around the big field in front of the house before Kiah enlisted to go into the Civil War and then after two years, to come back with several southern bullets still in his right leg and which always bothered wickedly when a shower like this one was approaching.

For a moment she faltered in her purpose of doing things as she had planned. Then the remembrance of the goodbye kick in the rear swept over her and with teeth tightly clinched and the gun in her right hand, she opened the screen door and stepped into the kitchen.

Kiah did not hear a thing of her coming, for just then a crash of thunder shook the dishes in the cupboard so that they rattled.

He half turned from the table to go out and shut the barn doors when she spoke, saying, "Kiah, put your boots on!"

The ugly end of the gun was staring him in the face as he looked up. It wasn't the gun that froze him to the chair, however; he had looked at the firing end of lots of
them in the war, with determined men behind them, and had held his own.

The blacksnake whip in Helen's other hand, as the lash snapped wickedly in the stillness of the kitchen, was another matter. It could blind a man if handled right, so he would be helpless.

Again the order came through the grim lips of his wife, "Kiah, put on your boots!!"

A bean rolled off the pile on the table and landed on the floor near Kiah's feet and from sheer force of habit he leaned down, picked it up and put it in the tin basin. Then stepping slowly to the woodbox he picked up the boots carefully, went back to the chair at the table and pulled them on his feet.

"And what now?" he asked in a steady voice as he looked up at her.

He had seen the killer look in men's eyes many times, but he could not be sure of Helen; her face was grim enough but the eyes seemed to be looking far ahead through time to come.

Perhaps, thought Kiah, she means to torture me for revenge.

Then Helen spoke again, and as the words
fell from her mouth, Kiah’s right hand, resting on the table, began to shake and little rivers of beans rolled off each side of the table to the floor, unnoticed by either one of them.

“Kiah, I left here a few days ago with a foolish idea in my head. You gave me part of my punishment as I was leaving, but only a little of what I really deserve. I have come back for the balance of it. You have both your boots on now. I am going to lay the gun on the table, stick the whip upright in that pile of beans, and then I am going to kneel down on this kitchen floor and you can kick me or whip me or use the gun. But, whatever method you use, I want to live and die right here in the place where I am asking you to forgive me for my foolish act.”

Kiah sat in shocked surprise with his mouth gaping open as Helen laid the six-shooter before him on the table, and stuck the loaded whip handle upright in the beans, the lash trailing on the kitchen floor.

Before she could kneel he came to his feet with a snap and his strong hands and arms enfolded her tenderly as he said, “You will
never kneel on the floor for me, girlie! You will never be whipped, kicked or shot! You are freely forgiven. I have made mistakes myself and I have asked God many times to forgive me for kicking you that morning you left and to bring you back. You are not the only girl who has been fooled by a skunk in a broadcloth suit!"

"Thank God my prayers have been answered," replied Helen, and, as another earth-shaking crash of thunder came, "I think we had better go down the road to the big pine tree and get my horse and some dunnage that should not get wet."

Later after stabling the horse and taking care of the dynamite, Kiah followed her into the house. The great barn doors were closed and fastened just in time as the wind and lashing rain roared over the buildings.

Kiah came in wiping his eyes. "Guess I got some hay chaff in my eyes out there."

"I wouldn't be surprised," replied his wife. "I got some in my eyes before I came in to ask you to forgive me!"

As Kiah stood looking out the back kitchen window, winking hard to conceal the tears in his eyes, there came the most vivid flash
of lightning he had ever seen. The thunderbolt seemed to be a solid stream of molten fire as it seemed to drill for several seconds into the ledge near the back of the house, then the mighty crash of the thunder made them both stagger from the shock.

“What was it?” gasped Helen. “Did the dynamite go off?”

“No,” replied Kiah, “it wasn’t the dynamite, it was the hand of the Lord putting a new seal on our promises to love each other. And we are very lucky, for he could have just as easily sent the bolt into the kitchen here if we had not.”
Where the Bear Skin Went

Then the glorious moonlight began shining over the fields again, the goose pimples disappeared from the black cookstove, the cold shivers stopped running up and down the hot stove poker, and the family skeleton in the parlor closet stopped sweating blood. An old bearskin which had crawled fearfully under the bed came back and resumed its usual place on the couch.

The old mare in the barnyard walked thoughtfully away to the far end of the back forty, laid her head on a mossy knoll and said to herself, "I can rest peacefully, now," as she died from lead poisoning.

The cast iron tea kettle resumed its happy song and the beans opened their eyes and rolled happily into the tin basin as Helen and Kiah picked them over to go to market for two cents a pound at Bangor, and a big spiderful of venison sizzled its way to a perfect meal on the stove, while in the bedroom off the kitchen the rope bedstead and corn husk mattress whispered to each other, saying, "This is the night we will take a beating."
Out in the broad fields the granite boulders, which had butted harrows, plows, and Buckeye mowing machines to splinters, huddled snugger to the ground as they realized the small pieces they would be made into by a hundred pounds of dynamite.

The six-shooter and shells along with the blacksnake whip laid on a shelf of the gun rack ready for any lightning rod salesman with modern ideas.

An hour later, as Helen and Kiah sat beside the stove, she remarked, "The tea kettle is singing a different tune than I ever heard before. What is it?"

"It's for the three of us, the tea kettle, you, and I," replied Kiah.

"But what is it?" asked Helen, looking with wondering eyes as she listened. Kiah began to whistle so low it could barely be heard, then tapping the toes of his boots on the kitchen floor, he began to sing:

"Helen's returned, no more will she roam, 
And we will make this old house a beautiful home. 
That's what the kettle is singing, 
Helen, and it's good enough for me!"
A few days after these events occurred, Uncle Elick and Uncle Bob drove up through Wellington Village toward’s Kiah’s farm with their equipment for a trip of camping and battling the big mosquitoes in the “Bog.”

They rode on a buckboard pulled by a “hossin’” mare that broke loose from the rigging with a kick of her heels and a defiant snort as she saw Kiah’s stallion in the pasture near the farmhouse. She was thirty-four years old, but the six-rail fence didn’t bother her at all, as she cleared it with room to spare.

Kiah met them near the house and, giving Uncle Elick a rousing slap on the back, remarked, “Don’t get your calfskin out, Elick. There will be no charge for service. She’s serving herself!!!”

“Come in the house to dinner both of you. I’ve just finished haying. Helen and I are drilling rocks now, and we are going to blow them sky high with dynamite.”

“Brought along fifty pounds of it myself,”
replied Uncle Elick, “to use on those big mosquitoes in the Bog.”

After a good hearty meal on venison, peas and johnnycake, the menfolks went to the field and helped Kiah drill rocks. After two hours of it Uncle Bob remarked that it was too slow. “Let’s send for Abe to come over from West Athens with his big sledge hammer.”

“That’s a good idea,” agreed Kiah. “We can send up a smoke signal and I think he will be here in the morning bright and early.”

“For myself, I would like to have fish for supper and I am going after a good string of Burnt Land horned pout!”

Uncle Elick and Uncle Bob cruised around the Bog warily the rest of the afternoon, keeping to the high land around it. The low lands were perilous places to venture into.

About six o’clock they returned toward the farm and saw Kiah just returning from his fishing trip, really in a jam!!

Fishing for Burnt Land horned pout is different from ordinary fishing. You don’t go to the water at all.

At some time in the long, distant past, the horned pout was a clean, good-looking fish
and had a good-humored expression on its face and no horns. Then the settlers began to come in and cut down the great forests, then the burning began to clear the land for planting. Of course there was a tremendous lot of smoke and flying ashes. Many of the horned pout got confused and flopped out of the ponds and bogs, then over and over they would go in the ashes and dirt.

Gradually, over the years, they became almost black in color and grew horns to protect themselves from being stepped on by men and oxen. The ashes and smoke filled their eyes half the time and they grew to have a mean, ugly expression.

There wasn't much choice of a place to be, either on land or in the water and thousands of them preferred the burnt land and stayed there, living on the clean dew that fell at night, along with flies and worms during the daytime.

You will see by this description of them why Kiah didn't go fishing with a fishpole.

He yoked the oxen and hitched them onto the two-wheeled dumpcart, took an ox goad and pitchfork then went thumping and "Gee-Hawin'" away through the burnt land. Soon
there was a little puff of ashes from the ground. Kiah halted the oxen and began spearing horned pout with the pitchfork. In some places there would be only one, in others he often speared ten to twenty and threw them into the cart fast as he could work.

After two hours there were at least fifteen bushels in the cart, then he began the trip homeward. All went well at first, then there came the deadly nerve-racking sound of a swarm of the savage insects.
Action and Plenty of It

Kiah put the brad to the oxen, although they didn’t need any bradding, and turned them directly uphill toward the farm buildings. Never before had the big mosquitoes come to that section of the farm and probably wouldn’t have then if Kiah had not been hauling the load of fish.

A burnt land stump lot is not a first class race track for bellowing and galloping oxen, and they had just made top speed when a wheel hit a stump and Kiah along with two or three bushels of Burnt Land horned pout went flying through the air. Kiah turned several somersaults before coming to a stop with fish all around him.

Then the savage mosquitoes swooped in for the kill!

These were no little annoying insects like you meet while fishing or on a picnic. They stood high as a horse on legs nearly as large as a broomstick and would weigh ten to thirty-five pounds apiece, with a wingspread of over six feet and a drilling apparatus
which would make any human being shudder to look at it.

Often the big ones had been known to carry off stray sheep, dogs and calves.

Kiah was in a terrible situation and all he could do at first was to roll over and over in the dirt and ashes. If he could keep moving quickly enough they could not get a grip on him to drill or lift him off the ground and fly to the Bog.

There were at least twenty-five of the monster insects and, when they settled to the ground Kiah was completely covered, as they fought for a place to get at him and the horned pout.

“Keep rollin’, Kiah!” shouted Uncle Bob as he let loose a charge of buckshot. “We are coming a rippin’ and a-roarin’!”

Uncle Elick had taken only an axe when starting out, and with it for a weapon, he waded into the struggle. The swarm of attackers was soon thinned down one-half with the axe and the lustily swinging gun butt of Uncle Bob’s. He did not dare to stop to reload, things were at too close quarters.

Then there came a cry from Kiah.

“Help me quick, boys, or ’twill be too late!”
The two rescuers turned to look, and there they saw, just out of reach, two of the monsters with a grip on Kiah and actually beginning to go into the air with him.

Uncle Elick threw the axe at one and made a hole in its wing, but they were still taking their load higher.

Uncle Bob was being hard pressed by several more and had all he could tend to. It seemed just then that Kiah's time was up!

After the menfolks left the farmhouse, Helen saddled her horse for a trip to Wellington settlement. Three miles away at the store she purchased a two-gallon jug of molasses, a few spices, a bottle of Kikapoo Indian Sagwa Liniment, two pounds of butter paper, a ten-pound box of fine salt, and fifty pounds of rock salt for salting pork down in barrels, and a large ball of twine to string dried apples on.

A new apple-paring machine looked good to her and she bought it for two dollars and fifty cents, also a new apple-coring knife for five cents, some candle wicking and a little package of western hog bristles for Kiah to use as needles on waxed ends in shoe reparing; a box of Portland Star matches
which cost twenty cents and would last the ordinary sized family a year, and smell of Hell and the hereafter every time one was lighted.

A small bottle of toothache remedy labeled Pure Panther Piss, twenty-five cents, completed her list of supplies and after stowing them in the saddlebags, she mounted the horse and headed for the farm.

There was plenty of time to get home before supper, so she did not hurry.

The road was mainly through forest land of great pine, spruce and hardwood trees. Bear and wildcats were numerous in that section and the well-oiled six-gun on her hip seemed a closer friend than ever as the road led on and on among the great tree trunks with limbs meeting overhead, shutting out the sunlight.

A doe and two fawns stepped daintily out of the trail to stand watching as the horse passed them. A mother partridge in the road ahead suddenly had a broken neck, then a crippled leg and next a broken wing as she kept just ahead of the horse until her little ones were well hidden. One of the little fellows had clutched a good-sized leaf of last
year’s foliage and turned on its back with the leaf covering it completely. Just to see how well the training had been done, Helen slowly dragged her whiplash across the leaf. The little fellow remembered what its parents had been teaching all right, for it did not make a move and all the time the mother partridge swooped and even came so close that her wings brushed Helen’s hair.

Then, as the horse started forward, she had another spasm of crippled action until Helen was well away from the brood.

A mile further along the road, she saw a family of coons which watched curiously as the horse passed by.

Then, as she came out into the open land near the farm, her quiet ride ended.

The oxen came bellowing and plunging out of the burnt land, then across the big field to the barn where they widened out the tieup doorway as they went in, cart and all.
Helen to the Rescue

Up to the porch rode Helen at a fast trot where she unloaded the saddlebags, then, as the sound of Kiah’s call for help came to her across the burnt land, she yanked a coil of rope off a wooden peg on the wall and, with a flying leap, hit the saddle and took off like a flash.

She had never used the whip or the spurs on the horse, but now she used both and the surprised animal leaped ahead like the wind, leaving behind a trail of horse farts which sounded like a string of firecrackers.

All Helen could imagine was that Kiah had been attacked by a bear and the rope was to tie him onto the horse if he was badly injured.

Madly she rode on, lashing her steed at every leap, then at last she saw the battle and, with a shout of “help’s coming,” she gripped the handle of the blacksnake whip so tight that her hand was sore for days afterwards.

One second more and her arrival would have been too late to save her husband; the
two big mosquitoes had lifted him five feet off the ground and were flying toward the Bog. With a last desperate surge of speed she came alongside the monster insects and the lash of the whip cut the wing of one into ribbons.

Turning the horse in a half circle she came by them again and this time the other mosquito had a ruined wing also as the whip lash snapped wickedly to the right spot.

Kiah came to the ground in a sitting position so hard it flattened both his depend-ents.

Uncle Elick was in a tangle on the ground with one of the insects and was losing the round until he thought to spit tobacco juice in the monster's eyes. Uncle Bob was down on his knees trying to choke one to death and another was trying to drill into his back.

Uncle Elick came to the rescue with a flying tackle, took that one to earth, then turning the ugly monster face up he grapped it by the neck and let go another stream of tobacco juice into its eyes.

Helen ventilated four more with the six-shooter as they sailed in ready for trouble. Then the fighters had time to really look
around in a peaceable way. There were over a dozen crippled mosquitoes and Uncle Elick made short work of them after picking up his axe.

There were still two trying to clear tobacco juice from their eyes and they were the biggest ones.

"Always wanted to get a couple of those hellions alive," remarked Uncle Elick, "and now is the time to do it."

"Put the rope on them, then, and load them on the horse," remarked Helen.

After the monster insects were securely tied up, Uncle Bob held their heads on a stump while Uncle Elick cut off their drilling apparatus close to their chins with the axe. "Now they can eat on their hands and knees," chuckled Kiah. "Let's get along to supper."

"Yes," remarked Helen, "you wanted Burnt Land horned pout if I remember right."

"Never want to see another one," replied Kiah with a shudder. "Just fry up a double charge of deer steak and put on about an eight-quart dish of your good old baked beans with plenty of johnnycake. I need something more stimulating than fish to quiet my nerves."
Bull Rings and Mosquito Cutlets!

Later in the evening the three men went to the barn and looked over the captives. The monster insects still seemed full of fight. The rope around their bodies and wings showed signs of fraying out.

"Tell you what we can do to hold them," remarked Kiah. "We can put a bullring in each of their noses and hitch them with a chain. I've got a couple of the three-inch copper rings and the rigging to do the job right here in the barn."

"Good idea," replied Uncle Elick. "I would hate to lose them; they are two of the rug-gedest male mosquitoes I ever saw."

After quite a lively tussle the legs of the monster insects were tied securely with quarter-inch rope. Uncle Bob was kicked half way across the barn floor and Uncle Elick got upended twice before the roping was done, however.

Then by lantern light the holes were pierced and the copper bullrings inserted.

"Kind of makes them look all dressed up," said Uncle Bob as the job was completed.
“Yes,” replied Helen who had been holding the lantern. “They do look better, but they are still too ugly. I know how to take the fight out of a tomcat, and perhaps it will work with them! Just bring them into the kitchen, lay them on the table, you three menfolks hold them steady under the hanging lamp, and I will take Kiah’s straight razor and do the operating!!!

“Now take it easy-like, you winged devils, while I strop this razor and I’ll show you that you never had it so good and should have stayed in Wellington Bog.”

A half hour later the job was completed. Pine tar rubbed on the cuts, and the cutlets, weighing a quarter of a pound apiece, were reposing together in Helen’s mixing bowl.

Then the monster insects were hitched to posts in the barn with good rugged tie chains like those used to hitch cows with. Their wings were buckled down tight to their bodies with heavy leather hame straps and a pail of cornmeal mush given to them for supper. Then the horned pout were cleaned and salted down in stone crocks. The horns were carefully snipped off and saved to be used as darning needles and brads in fine
cabinet work. Lots of the old time chests and picture frames were put together with them.

They were smoked a few hours over a fire made out of cedar boughs, old oak leaves and a little moss from softwood trees, then hung up in the old-time open chamber to season.

Midnight had come and gone when all was cleaned up and put in apple-pie order. Uncle Elick and Uncle Bob flopped down and went to sleep, boots and clothes on, in the hay-mow.

Kiah, who had such a jolted bottom that he could not sit down to eat, couldn’t lay down either, and went fast asleep standing up in one corner of the bedroom.

Helen, who always planned on picking over a half bushel of beans each evening, turned out the usual amount on the table and went to work.

The tall clock sent out its measured ticking, the tea kettle began to sing its cheery little song, and Helen’s head sank lower and lower, then she went fast asleep with her face in the pile of yellow-eyed beans
and her beautiful hair streaming down over her shoulders.

Outside, a big buck deer peeped into the back window of the kitchen, wondering why the light was burning so late. In front of the house a doe with two fawns walked up beside the grindstone under the crabapple tree and bedded down for the night.

Out to the far end of the great barn a mother bear and two cubs made a quiet meal on the refuse from the Burnt Land horned pout. And in the nearby forest an owl queried Whoo! Whoo! Whoo? Another answered saying, Whoo? Whoo? Whoo? but no reply came from the farmhouse, for all were fast asleep.

Next morning at breakfast, after three helpings of red flannel hash, Kiah remarked that it was the best Helen had ever made, and the others agreed as they passed their plates for more.

With a smile Helen told them it was not every morning that she had mosquito cutlets to chop up with the hash!

“That will be a good stimulant for you, Kiah. Guess you need it all right.”
West Athens Abe

Abe of West Athens, a friendly young giant, came across through the forest afoot carrying on his shoulder his favorite sledge hammer which was made from a blacksmith's anvil weighing a hundred pounds, hung on a handle three inches in diameter and five feet long. I won't try to tell you how big he was because you might not believe it.

It was a time for a man with nerve to hold drill and Uncle Bob did it as the big hammer struck down with mighty thuds, like a well drill, hour after hour.

Uncle Elick and Kiah were busy men cleaning out drill holes and sharpening the two-inch drills.

At noon the holes were ready to load with dynamite and that afternoon the big granite boulders went flying into small pieces as the explosions shook the countryside.

West Athens Abe stayed to supper but wouldn't stay overnight; said it was the busy season for him and he had to be on another job in the early morning.

The fact that he had carried a one hun-
dred pound sledge hammer nine miles through the forest that morning and was going to carry it back the same way on his shoulders meant nothing unusual to him.

The West Athens folks were a mighty race of people in those days and good workmen, at most any job from sawmill work to making oxyokes, hoes, rakes, brooms, and the usual run of chairs and rockers with woven seats and backs made of white ash. They were people with very little education, as schools in that section were scarce as hen's teeth.

Although they lacked book learning, they did quite a lot to set the styles. Some smart educated folks from the city came visiting one summer and went back home to make fun and tell how the West Athens folks put a chamber mug on each other's heads and cut off what hair hung below it with sheep shears, which was called bobbed hair. Inside a year the bobbed hair craze swept the whole United States.

Then another style started in West Athens when a woman, who like to wear clean clothing, had only one skirt and wanted to wash it. She took it off and put on a meal
bag while her skirt was drying on the line. Of course, she could only take little short, mincing steps with the snug fitting meal bag down around her ankles, and along came some slick chicks from the city again and pointed their fingers and snickered. Back to the city they went and acted out like the woman wearing the meal bag. Next the hobble skirt craze swept the whole country and even the steps of the street cars were lowered to accommodate those dainty damsels who could only step up about three inches while wearing them.

This was the settlement Abe came from and Kiah, knowing conditions there, paid him a whole dollar in money, although he had worked only about nine and a half hours striking drill and lugging rocks to the wall. Also Kiah gave Abe half a bushel of beans, a bushel of potatoes, a one hundred pound bag of cornmeal and five pounds of fine salt. All of it went into the big pack basket Abe carried on his back and away he went to walk the nine miles home with the big sledge hammer on his shoulder.
Uncle Elick and Uncle Bob on the Warpath

Uncle Elick, when leaving home, came prepared to give the denizens of Wellington Bog a surprise. It was very late that night when preparations were completed for the dangerous venture from which he and Uncle Bob might not return alive.

The fifty sticks of dynamite which they brought along from Harmony were cut in half, a cap and twelve-inch fuse inserted in each one, then it was wrapped up in pieces of feed bags along with a Burnt Land horned pout. Soon after sunrise next morning they shouldered their pack baskets to make the two-mile trip through the forest to the Bog.

Only one thing had been found at that time to keep the monsters away and that was skunk scent; they would not come within fifty feet of it, but there was always the danger of one diving in by accident and knocking a man senseless.

Uncle Bob had obtained two small bottles of the skunk scent from a trapper and hun-
ter in an isolated section of Russell Mountain while on a trip after blueberries the season before. The trapper was a good natured old fellow who followed the uncrowded profession of collecting skunk scent to sell and was doing pretty good at it.

At the entrance to the trail leading to his log cabin were two giant pine trees, one on each side, and into the bark in big letters was chiseled his name:

A. STINKER!!

During the off season for skunks and in the winter months he carved out the little gum barrels that were in almost every farmhouse and logging camp at that time. They would hold about a tumblerful of spruce gum and had a screw top of wood. After they were made and boiled in skunk oil, they turned a beautiful brown color and it was hard to believe they were made from white birch wood. After they were treated and dried he put his mark on them with a red hot knitting needle; it was:

Made by
A. STINKER

He was an expert workman, doing the
whole job by hand and also made money-bags with drawstrings in the tops out of woodchuck skins.

Always when customers came he would ask them to stay awhile and visit but most of them had to hurry along and only a very few stayed to a meal of his delicious skunk stews.

He always proudly shook up a pile of fresh skunk skins to show them before they left, telling them at the same time that there was a big difference in the smell of some, and saying, "take a sniff of this one, and now try this one," as he passed out another and grabbed for a third sample, but by that time the customer would be out of hearing and he would grumble to himself that some people didn't want to learn anything.

Whenever he could, which was most of the time, he would sleep with a skunk skin under his pillow. He said it was good to ward off colds, but none of his customers would believe that either.

When fairly close to the Bog the skunk scent was liberally applied and Uncle Elick stepped well out into the lowland, lighted a fuse and laid the package down.
The big mosquitoes could smell a fish a mile away and long before the charge went off there were thousands of them swarming around.

Uncle Bob was busy putting out more dynamite also and then the explosions began to shake the bogland. Thousands of the monster insects were killed outright but the dynamite fumes were what caused the main part of the execution. There was no wind that morning and the fumes and smoke hung low to the muckland for hours. Every mosquito that got near it fell end over end and expired.

Helen and Kiah followed along with shotguns in case of bad luck, but they were not needed.

By ten o'clock all the dynamite had been used, then a good-sized fire was made and green cedar boughs thrown on. The four fighters stood around in the thick smoke for an hour, which helped kill most of the skunk scent on them, and then went to work collecting mosquito cutlets.

In the afternoon they worked together and helped Helen salt down two half barrels of them, which made the mince pies and red
flannel hash have that "try-some-more" flavor.

Bullfrogs had a picnic that summer on the carcasses of the monster mosquitoes and grew to weigh seventy-five pounds or more apiece.

All the big insects were not wiped out at that time and no one knows just what happened. It might be that the dynamite fumes still stayed in the soft muckland. Anyhow, the next year there were no big ones anywhere.

The bullfrogs kept growing bigger as the years went on, and it is nothing unusual even now for a fisherman to come out of that Bog and tell about how a one hundred pound one climbed into the canoe with him. They are not vicious, however, and just seem to go along for the ride.

How Uncle Elick and Uncle Bob trained the two big mosquitoes in the barn and how they grew in the next few weeks would surprise you. They did it at last along with a trip to Russell Mountain after blueberries, and a whole day's session cutting down a giant basswood bee tree from which they got four wooden washtubsful of honey. Then
one bright sunshiny morning they said good-bye to Helen and Kiah and took off down the road.

The sensation they created as the buckboard loaded with two washtubsful of honey, four scythe boxes* full of blueberries, and the two men on the seat was long remembered in Wellington and Harmony.

The mosquitoes had grown to weigh at least four hundred pounds apiece and they came down out of the hills at a spanking trot hitched to the buckboard, and the thirty-four-year-old mare came prancing along behind.

As the doctor who had operated on Kiah excitedly described it the next day, it was the worst thing he ever witnessed.

"Great Jerusalem, folks, there are ten of the worst cases of nervous prostitution caused by it in Harmony and Wellington that I ever saw!! Better wear a camphor bag on your neck, folks, this might turn into an eperdemick!"

And away he went at a gallop.

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(*Scythe boxes were a favorite container on blueberrying trips at that time. Grub could be packed in them, also tin dishes, and on the return trip they were filled with blueberries.)