

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott  
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel  
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen  
Weber Freiligrath Frey  
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel  
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas  
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach  
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil  
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London  
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Lichtenberg Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer  
Trackl Stevenson Lenz Hambrecht Doyle Gjellerup  
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff  
Dach Thoma Verne Hägele Hauptmann Humboldt  
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier  
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder  
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George  
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust  
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot  
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy  
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius  
Chamberlain Schiller Lafontaine Iffland Sokrates  
Brentano Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Schilling Kralik Gibbon Tschchow  
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius  
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke  
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil  
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus  
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus  
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke  
Nestroy Marie de France  
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz  
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz  
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving  
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# **The Heart of the Range**

William Patterson White

# Imprint

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# **TO RANGER**

**A GOOD HORSE AND A BETTER FRIEND**



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# THE HEART OF THE RANGE

## CHAPTER I

### THE HORSE THIEF

It was a warm summer morning in the town of Farewell. Save a dozen horses tied to the hitching-rail in front of various saloons and the Blue Pigeon Store and Bill Lainey, the fat landlord of the hotel, who sat snoring in a reinforced telegraph chair on the sidewalk in the shade of his wooden awning, Main Street was a howling wilderness.

Dust overlay everything. It had not rained in weeks. In the blacksmith shop, diagonally across the street from the hotel, Piney Jackson was shoeing a mule. The mule was invisible, but one knew it was a mule because Piney Jackson has just come out and taken a two-by-four from the woodpile behind the shop. And it was a well-known fact that Piney never used a two-by-four on any animal other than a mule. But this by the way.

In the barroom of the Happy Heart Saloon there were only two customers and the bartender. One of the former, a brown-haired, sunburnt young man with ingenuous blue eyes, was singing:

*"Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,  
An' merrily jump the stile O!  
Yore cheerful heart goes all the day,  
Yore sad tires in a mile O!"*

Mr. Racey Dawson, having successfully sung the first verse, rested both elbows on the bar and grinned at the bartender. That wor-

thy grinned back, and, knowing Mr. Dawson, slid the bottle along the bar.

"Have one yoreself, Bill," Mr. Dawson nodded to the bartender. "Whu – where's Swing? Oh, yeah."

Mr. Dawson, head up, chest out, stepping high, and walking very stiffly as befitted a gentleman somewhat over-served with liquor, crossed the barroom to where bristle-haired Swing Tunstall sat on a chair and slumbered, his head on his arms and his arms on a table.

Mr. Dawson stooped and blew into Mr. Tunstall's right ear. Mr. Tunstall began to snore gently. Growing irritated by this continued indifference on the part of Mr. Tunstall, Mr. Dawson seized the chair by rung and back and incontinently dumped Mr. Tunstall all abroad on the saloon floor.

Mr. Tunstall promptly hitched himself into a corner and drifted deeper into slumber.

Mr. Dawson turned a perplexed face on the bartender.

"Now what you gonna do with a feller like that?" Mr. Dawson asked, plaintively.

Mr. Jack Richie, manager of the Cross-in-a-box ranch, entering at the moment, temporarily diverted Mr. Dawson's attention. For Mr. Dawson had once ridden for the Cross-in-a-box outfit. Hence he was moved literally to fall upon the neck of Mr. Richie.

"Lean on yore own breakfast," urged Mr. Richie, studiously dissembling his joy at sight of his old friend, and carefully steering Mr. Dawson against the bar. "Here, I know what you need. Drink hearty, Racey."

"S'on me," declared Mr. Dawson. "Everythin's on me. I gug-got money, I have, and I aim to spend it free an' plenty, 'cause there's more where I'm goin'. An' I ain't gonna earn it punchin' cows, neither."

"Don't do anything rash," Mr. Richie advised, and took advantage of a friend's privilege to be insulting. "I helped lynch a road-agent only last month."

"Which the huh-holdup business is too easy for a live man," opined Mr. Dawson. "We want somethin' mum-more diff-diff-difficult, me an' Swing do, so we're goin' to Arizona where the gold grows. No more wrastlin' cows. No more hard work for us. *We're* gonna get rich quick, we are. What you laughin' at?"

"I never laugh," denied Mr. Richie. "When yo're stakin' out claims don't forget me."

"We won't," averred Mr. Dawson, solemnly. "Le's have another."

They had another — several others.

The upshot was that when Mr. Richie (who was the lucky possessor of a head that liquor did not easily affect) departed homeward at four P.M., he left behind him a sadly plastered Mr. Dawson.

Mr. Tunstall, of course, was still sleeping deeply and noisily. But Mr. Dawson had long since lost interest in Mr. Tunstall. It is doubtful whether he remembered that Mr. Tunstall existed. The two had begun their party immediately after breakfast. Mr. Tunstall had succumbed early, but Mr. Dawson had not once halted his efforts to make the celebration a huge success. So it is not a subject for surprise that Mr. Dawson, some thirty minutes after bidding Mr. Richie an affectionate farewell, should stagger out into the street and ride away on the horse of someone else.

The ensuing hours of the evening and the night were a merciful blank to Mr. Dawson. His first conscious thought was when he awoke at dawn on a side-hill, a sharp rock prodding him in the small of the back and the bridle-reins of his dozing horse wound round one arm. Only it was not his horse. His horse was a red roan. This horse was a bay. It wasn't his saddle, either.

"Where's my hoss?" he demanded of the world at large and sat up suddenly.

The sharp movement wrung a groan from the depths of his being. The loss of his horse was drowned in the pains of his aching head. Never was such all-pervading ache. He knew the top was coming off. He knew it. He could feel it, and then did — with his fingers. He groaned again.

His tongue was dry as cotton, and it hurt him to swallow. He stood up, but as promptly sat down. In a whisper—for speech was torture—he began to revile himself for a fool.

"I might have known it," was his plaint. "I had a feelin' when I took that last glass it was one too many. I never did know when to stop. I'd like to know how I got here, and where my hoss is, and who belongs to this one?"

He eyed the mount with disfavour. He had never cared for bays.

"An' that ain't much of a saddle, either," he went on with his soliloquy. "Cheap saddle—looks like a boy's saddle—an' a old saddle—bet Noah used one just like it—try to rope with that saddle an' you'd pull the horn to hellen gone. Wonder what's in that saddle-pocket."

He pulled himself erect slowly and tenderly. His knees were very shaky. His head throbbed like a squeezed boil, but—he wanted to learn what was in that saddle-pocket. Possibly he might obtain therein a clue to the horse's owner.

He slipped the strap of the pocket-flap, flipped it open, inserted his fingers, and drew forth a small package wrapped in newspaper and tied with the blue string affected by the Blue Pigeon Store in Farewell.

Mr. Dawson balanced the package on two fingers for a reflective instant, then he snapped the string and opened the package.

"Socks an' a undershirt," he said, disgustedly, and started to say more, but paused, for there was something queer about that undershirt. His head was still spinning, and his eyes were sandy, but he perceived quite plainly that there were narrow blue ribbons running round the neck of that undershirt. He unrolled the socks and found them much longer in the leg than the kind habitually worn by men. Mr. Dawson agitatedly dived his hand once more into the saddle-pocket. And this time he pulled out a tortoise-shell shuttle round which was wrapped several inches of lingerie edging. But Mr. Dawson did not call it lingerie edging. He called it tatting and swore again.

"That settles it," he said, cheerlessly. "I've stole some woman's cayuse."



## CHAPTER II

### THE YELLOW DOG

It was a chastened Racey Dawson that returned to Farewell. He went directly to the blacksmith shop.

"Lo, Hoss Thief," was Piney Jackson's cheerful greeting.

"Whose is it?" demanded Racey Dawson, wiping his hot face. "Whose hoss have I stole?"

"Oh, you'll catch it," chuckled the humorous Piney. "Yep, you betcha. You've got a gall, you have. Camly prancing out of a saloon an' glooming onto a lady's hoss. What kind o' doin's is that, I'd like to know?"

"You blasted idjit!" cried the worried Racey. "Whose hoss is this?"

"I kind o' guessed maybe something disgraceful like this here would happen when I seen you and yore friend sashay into the Happy Heart.

And the barkeep said you had two snifters and a glass o' milk, too. Honest, Racey, you'd oughta be more careful how you mix yore drinks."

"Don't try to be a bigger jack than you are," Racey adjured him in a tone that he strove to make contemptuous. "You think yo're awful funny—just too awful funny, don't you? I'm askin' you, you fish-faced ape, whose hoss this is I got here?"

"Don't you know?" grinned Piney, elevating both eyebrows. "Lordy, I wouldn't be in yore shoes for something. Nawsir. She'll snatch you baldheaded, she will. The old lady was wild when she come out an' found her good hoss missing. And she shore said what she thought of you some more when she seen she had to ride home on that old crow's dinner of a moth-eaten accordeen you left behind."

Racey Dawson was too reduced in spirit to properly take umbrage at this insult to his horse. He could only repeat his request that Piney make not of himself a bigger fool than usual. And when Piney did nothing but laugh immoderately, Racey grinned foolishly.

"If my head didn't ache so hard," he assured the chortling blacksmith, "I'd shore talk to you, but—Say, lookit here, Piney, quit yore foolin', will you? Who owns this hoss, anyway?"

"Here comes Kansas," said Piney. "Betcha five even he arrests you for a hoss thief."

"Gimme odds an' I'll go you," Racey returned, promptly.

"Even," stuck out Piney.

"Naw, he might do it. You Farewell jiggers hang together too hard for me to take any chances. 'Lo, Kansas."

"Howdy, Racey," nodded Kansas Casey, the deputy sheriff. "How long you been rustlin' hosses?"

"A damsight longer'n I like," Racey replied, frankly. "Who *does* own this hoss?"

"Y' oughta asked that question yesterday," said Kansas, severely, but with a twinkle in his black eyes that belied his tone. "This here would be mighty serious business for you if the Sheriff was in town. Jake's so particular about being legal an' all. Yessir, Racey, old-timer, I expect you'd spend some time in the calaboose—if you wasn't lynched previous."

"Don't scare the poor feller," pleaded Piney in a tone of deepest compassion. "He'll be cryin' in a minute."

"In a minute I'll be doing somethin' besides cry if you fellers don't stop yore funning. This here is past a joke, this is, and—"

"Shore it's past a joke," Kansas concurred, warmly, "an' I ain't funning, not for a minute. You go give that hoss back, Racey, or you'll be sorry."

"Well, for Gawd's sake tell me who to give it back to!" bawled Racey, and immediately batted his eyes and gingerly patted the back of his head.

"Head ache?" queried Kansas. "I expect it might after last night. You go give that hoss back like a good boy."

So saying Kansas Casey turned his back and retreated rapidly in the direction of the Starlight Saloon.

Racey Dawson glared vindictively after the departing deputy. Then he switched his angry blue eyes to the blacksmith's smiling countenance.

"You can all," said Racey Dawson, distinctly, "go plumb to hell."

He turned the purloined pony on a dime and loped up the street, followed by the ribald laughter of Piney Jackson.

"They think they're so terrible funny," Racey muttered, mournfully, as he dismounted and tied at the hitching rail in front of the Happy Heart. "Now if I can only find Swing—"

But Swing Tunstall, it appeared on consulting the bartender, had gone off hunting him (Racey). The latter did not appeal to the bartender to divulge the name of the horse's owner. He had, he believed, furnished the local populace sufficient amusement for one day. He had a small drink, for he felt that he needed a bracer, and with the liquor he imbibed inspiration.

Miss Blythe, Mike Flynn's partner in the Blue Pigeon Store! She would know whose horse it was, for certainly the horse's owner had bought the undershirt and the stockings at the Blue Pigeon. Furthermore, Miss Blythe looked like a right-minded individual. She would take no pleasure in devilling a man. Not she.

Racey Dawson set down his glass and hurried to the Blue Pigeon Store. Miss Blythe, at his entrance, ceased checking tomato cans and came forward.

"Ma'am," said Racey, "will you come to the door a minute? No, no, don't be scared!" he added as the lady drew back a step. "I'm kind of in trouble, an' I want you to help me out. I'm—my name's Racey Dawson, an' I used to ride for the Cross-in-a-box before I got a job up at the Bend. Jack Richie knows me. I ain't crazy—honest."

For Miss Blythe continued to look doubtful. "I—" she began.

"Lookit," he interrupted, "yesterday I got a heap drunk an' I rode off on somebody's hoss without meaning to—I mean I thought it was my hoss and it wasn't. An' I thought maybe you'd tell me who the hoss belongs to so's I can return him and get mine back. She took mine, they tell me. Not that I blame her a mite," he added, hastily.

Pretty Miss Blythe smiled suddenly. "I did hear something about a switch in horses yesterday afternoon," she admitted. "But I thought Mr. Flynn said Tom Dowling was the man's name. Certainly I remember you now, Mr. Dawson, although at first your—your beard—"

"Yeah, I know," he put in, hurriedly. "I ain't shaved since I left the Bend, and I slept mostly on my face last night, but it's li'l ol' me all right behind the whiskers and real estate. Yeah, that's the hoss yonder—the one next the pinto."

"I know the horse," said Miss Blythe, drawing back from the doorway.

"It belongs to the Dales over at Medicine Spring on Soogan Creek."

"Oh, I know *them*," Racey declared, confidently (he had been at the Dales' precisely once). "The girl married Chuck Morgan. Shore, Mis' Dale's hoss, huh? I'll take it right back soon's I get shaved. I s'pose I'll have a jomightyful time explaining it to the old lady."

"It isn't the mother's horse. It's the daughter's. She was in town yesterday."

"You mean Chuck's wife, Mis' Morgan?"

"I mean *Miss* Molly Dale, the *other* daughter."

"I didn't know they had another daughter," puzzled Racey, thinking of what Piney Jackson had said anent an "old lady." "They must 'a' kept her in the background when I was there that time. What is she—a old maid?"

"Oh, middle-aged, perhaps," was the straight-faced reply.

"Shucks, I might have known it," grumbled Racey; "middle-aged old maid! I know what they're like. I had one once for a school-

teacher. I can feel her lickings yet. She was the contrariest female I ever met. Shucks, I—Well, if I gotta, I gotta. Might's well get it over with now as later. Thanks, ma'am, for helping me out."

Racey Dawson shambled dejectedly forth to effect the feeding of Miss Molly Dale's horse at the hotel corral. For his own breakfast he went to Sing Luey's Canton Restaurant. Because while Bill Lainey offered no objections to feeding the horse, Mrs. Lainey utterly refused to provide snacks at odd hours for good-for-nothing, stick-a-bed punchers who were too lazy to eat at the regular meal-time. So there, now.

"But I ain't gonna shave," he told himself, as he disposed of fried steak and potatoes slogged down by several cups of coffee. "If she's a old maid like they say it don't matter how tough I look."

He was reflectively stirring the grounds in the bottom of his sixth cup when a small and frightened yellow dog dashed into the restaurant and fled underneath Racey's table, where he cowered next to Racey's boots and cuddled a lop-eared head against Racey's knee.

Racey had barely time to glance down and discover that the yellow nondescript was no more than a pup when a burly youth charged into the restaurant and demanded in no uncertain tones to know where that adjective dog had hidden himself.

Racey took an instant dislike to the burly youth, still—it was his dog. And it is a custom of the country to let every man, as the saying is, skin his own deer. He that takes exception to this custom and horns in on what cannot rightfully be termed his particular business, will find public opinion dead against him and his journey unseasonably full of incident.

Racey moved a leg. "This him, stranger?"

The burly youth (it was evident that he was not wholly sober) glared at Racey Dawson. "Shore it's him!" he declared. "Whatell you hidin' him for? Get outa the way!"

Whereupon the burly youth advanced upon Racey.

This was different. Oh, quite. The burly youth had by his brusque manner and rude remarks included Racey in his (the burly youth's) business.

Racey met the burly youth rather more than halfway. He hit him so hard on the nose that the other flipped backward through the doorway and landed on his ear on the sidewalk.

Racey followed him out. The burly youth, bleeding copiously from the nose, sat up and fumbled uncertainly for his gun.

"No," said Racey with decision, aiming his sixshooter at the word. "You leave that gun alone, and lemme tell you, stranger, while we're together, that I want to buy that pup of yores. A gent like you ain't fit company for a self-respecting dog to associate with. Nawsir."

"You got the drop," grumbled the burly youth.

"Which is one on you," Racey observed, good-humouredly.

"Maybe I'll be seein' you again," suggested the other.

"Don't lemme see you first," advised Racey. "Never mind getting up. Just sit nice and quiet like a good boy, and keep the li'l hands spread out all so pretty with the thumbs locked over yore head. 'At's the boy. How much for yore dog, feller?"

"What you done to my dog?" A woman's voice broke on Racey's ears. But he did not remove his slightly narrowed eyes from the face of the burly youth.

"What you done to my dog?" The question was repeated, and the speaker came close to the burly youth and looked down at him. Now that the woman was within his range of vision Racey perceived that she was the Happy Heart lookout, a good-looking creature with brown hair and a lithe figure.

The girl's fists were clenched so tightly that her knuckles showed whitely against the pink. Two red spots flared on the white skin of her cheeks.

"Dam yore soul!" swore the lady. "I want my dog! How many tunes I gotta ask you, huh? Where is he? Say somethin', you dumb lump of slum gullion!"

"He ain't yore dog!" denied the burly youth. "He never was yores! He's mine, you —!"