

The Trail of the Lonesome Pine

John Fox, Jr.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of The Trail of the Lonesome Pine, by John Fox, Jr.
#7 in our series by John Fox, Jr.

Copyright laws are changing all over the world. Be sure to check the copyright laws for your country before downloading or redistributing this or any other Project Gutenberg eBook.

This header should be the first thing seen when viewing this Project Gutenberg file. Please do not remove it. Do not change or edit the header without written permission.

Please read the "legal small print," and other information about the eBook and Project Gutenberg at the bottom of this file. Included is important information about your specific rights and restrictions in how the file may be used. You can also find out about how to make a donation to Project Gutenberg, and how to get involved.

****Welcome To The World of Free Plain Vanilla Electronic Texts****

****eBooks Readable By Both Humans and By Computers, Since 1971****

*******These eBooks Were Prepared By Thousands of Volunteers!*******

Title: The Trail of the Lonesome Pine

Author: John Fox, Jr.

Release Date: February, 2004 [EBook #5122]
[Yes, we are more than one year ahead of schedule]
[This file was first posted on May 4, 2002]

Edition: 10

Language: English

Character set encoding: ASCII

***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE *****

Produced by Charles Franks and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team

Livros Grátis

<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>

Milhares de livros grátis para download.

THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE

BY

JOHN FOX, JR.

ILLUSTRATED BY F. C. YOHAN

To F. S.

THE TRAIL OF THE LONESOME PINE

I

She sat at the base of the big tree--her little sunbonnet pushed back, her arms locked about her knees, her bare feet gathered under her crimson gown and her deep eyes fixed on the smoke in the valley below. Her breath was still coming fast between her parted lips. There were tiny drops along the roots of her shining hair, for the climb had been steep, and now the shadow of disappointment darkened her eyes. The mountains ran in limitless blue waves towards the mounting sun--but at birth her eyes had opened on them as on the white mists trailing up the steeps below her. Beyond them was a gap in the next mountain chain and down in the little valley, just visible through it, were trailing blue mists as well, and she knew that they were smoke. Where was the great glare of yellow light that the "circuit rider" had told about--and the leaping tongues of fire? Where was the shrieking monster that ran without horses like the wind and tossed back rolling black plumes all streaked with fire? For many days now she had heard stories of the "furriners" who had come into those hills and were doing strange things down there, and so at last she had climbed up through the dewy morning from the cove on the other side to see the wonders for herself. She had never been up there before. She had no business there now, and, if she were found out when she got back, she would get a scolding and maybe something worse from her step-mother--and all that trouble and risk for nothing but smoke. So, she lay back and rested--her little mouth tightening fiercely. It was a big world, though, that was spread before her and a vague awe of it seized her straightway and held her motionless and dreaming. Beyond those white mists trailing up the hills, beyond the blue smoke drifting in the valley, those limitless blue waves must run under the sun on and on to the end of the world! Her dead sister had gone into that far silence and had brought back wonderful stories of that outer world: and she began to wonder more than ever before whether she would ever go into it and see for herself what was there. With the thought, she rose slowly to

her feet, moved slowly to the cliff that dropped sheer ten feet aside from the trail, and stood there like a great scarlet flower in still air. There was the way at her feet--that path that coiled under the cliff and ran down loop by loop through majestic oak and poplar and masses of rhododendron. She drew a long breath and stirred uneasily--she'd better go home now--but the path had a snake-like charm for her and still she stood, following it as far down as she could with her eyes. Down it went, writhing this way and that to a spur that had been swept bare by forest fires. Along this spur it travelled straight for a while and, as her eyes eagerly followed it to where it sank sharply into a covert of maples, the little creature dropped of a sudden to the ground and, like something wild, lay flat.

A human figure had filled the leafy mouth that swallowed up the trail and it was coming towards her. With a thumping heart she pushed slowly forward through the brush until her face, fox-like with cunning and screened by a blueberry bush, hung just over the edge of the cliff, and there she lay, like a crouched panther-cub, looking down. For a moment, all that was human seemed gone from her eyes, but, as she watched, all that was lost came back to them, and something more. She had seen that it was a man, but she had dropped so quickly that she did not see the big, black horse that, unled, was following him. Now both man and horse had stopped. The stranger had taken off his gray slouched hat and he was wiping his face with something white. Something blue was tied loosely about his throat. She had never seen a man like that before. His face was smooth and looked different, as did his throat and his hands. His breeches were tight and on his feet were strange boots that were the colour of his saddle, which was deep in seat, high both in front and behind and had strange long-hooded stirrups. Starting to mount, the man stopped with one foot in the stirrup and raised his eyes towards her so suddenly that she shrank back again with a quicker throbbing at her heart and pressed closer to the earth. Still, seen or not seen, flight was easy for her, so she could not forbear to look again. Apparently, he had seen nothing--only that the next turn of the trail was too steep to ride, and so he started walking again, and his walk, as he strode along the path, was new to her, as was the erect way with which he held his head and his shoulders.

In her wonder over him, she almost forgot herself, forgot to wonder where he was going and why he was coming into those lonely hills until, as his horse turned a bend of the trail, she saw hanging from the other side of the saddle something that looked like a gun. He was a "raider"--that man: so, cautiously and swiftly then, she pushed herself back from the edge of the cliff, sprang to her feet, dashed past the big tree and, winged with fear, sped down the mountain--leaving in a spot of sunlight at the base of the pine the print of one bare foot in the black earth.

II

He had seen the big pine when he first came to those hills--one morning, at daybreak, when the valley was a sea of mist that threw

soft clinging spray to the very mountain tops: for even above the mists, that morning, its mighty head arose--sole visible proof that the earth still slept beneath. Straightway, he wondered how it had ever got there, so far above the few of its kind that haunted the green dark ravines far below. Some whirlwind, doubtless, had sent a tiny cone circling heavenward and dropped it there. It had sent others, too, no doubt, but how had this tree faced wind and storm alone and alone lived to defy both so proudly? Some day he would learn. Thereafter, he had seen it, at noon--but little less majestic among the oaks that stood about it; had seen it catching the last light at sunset, clean-cut against the after-glow, and like a dark, silent, mysterious sentinel guarding the mountain pass under the moon. He had seen it giving place with sombre dignity to the passing burst of spring--had seen it green among dying autumn leaves, green in the gray of winter trees and still green in a shroud of snow--a changeless promise that the earth must wake to life again. The Lonesome Pine, the mountaineers called it, and the Lonesome Pine it always looked to be. From the beginning it had a curious fascination for him, and straightway within him--half exile that he was--there sprang up a sympathy for it as for something that was human and a brother. And now he was on the trail of it at last. From every point that morning it had seemed almost to nod down to him as he climbed and, when he reached the ledge that gave him sight of it from base to crown, the winds murmured among its needles like a welcoming voice. At once, he saw the secret of its life. On each side rose a cliff that had sheltered it from storms until its trunk had shot upwards so far and so straight and so strong that its green crown could lift itself on and on and bend--blow what might--as proudly and securely as a lily on its stalk in a morning breeze. Dropping his bridle rein he put one hand against it as though on the shoulder of a friend.

"Old Man," he said, "You must be pretty lonesome up here, and I'm glad to meet you."

For a while he sat against it--resting. He had no particular purpose that day--no particular destination. His saddle-bags were across the cantle of his cow-boy saddle. His fishing rod was tied under one flap. He was young and his own master. Time was hanging heavy on his hands that day and he loved the woods and the nooks and crannies of them where his own kind rarely made its way. Beyond, the cove looked dark, forbidding, mysterious, and what was beyond he did not know. So down there he would go. As he bent his head forward to rise, his eye caught the spot of sunlight, and he leaned over it with a smile. In the black earth was a human footprint--too small and slender for the foot of a man, a boy or a woman. Beyond, the same prints were visible--wider apart--and he smiled again. A girl had been there. She was the crimson flash that he saw as he started up the steep and mistook for a flaming bush of sumach. She had seen him coming and she had fled. Still smiling, he rose to his feet.

On one side he had left the earth yellow with the coming noon, but it was still morning as he went down on the other side. The laurel and rhododendron still reeked with dew in the deep, ever-shaded ravine. The ferns drenched his stirrups, as he brushed through them, and each dripping tree-top broke the sunlight and let it drop in tent-like beams through the shimmering undermist. A bird flashed here and there through the green gloom, but there was no sound in the air but the footfalls of his horse and the easy creaking of leather under him, the drip of dew overhead and the running of water below. Now and then he could see the same slender foot-prints in the rich loam and he saw them in the sand where the first tiny brook tinkled across the path from a gloomy ravine. There the little creature had taken a flying leap across it and, beyond, he could see the prints no more. He little guessed that while he halted to let his horse drink, the girl lay on a rock above him, looking down. She was nearer home now and was less afraid; so she had slipped fro

Livros Grátis

(<http://www.livrosgratis.com.br>)

Milhares de Livros para Download:

[Baixar livros de Administração](#)

[Baixar livros de Agronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Arquitetura](#)

[Baixar livros de Artes](#)

[Baixar livros de Astronomia](#)

[Baixar livros de Biologia Geral](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Computação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência da Informação](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciência Política](#)

[Baixar livros de Ciências da Saúde](#)

[Baixar livros de Comunicação](#)

[Baixar livros do Conselho Nacional de Educação - CNE](#)

[Baixar livros de Defesa civil](#)

[Baixar livros de Direito](#)

[Baixar livros de Direitos humanos](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia](#)

[Baixar livros de Economia Doméstica](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação - Trânsito](#)

[Baixar livros de Educação Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Engenharia Aeroespacial](#)

[Baixar livros de Farmácia](#)

[Baixar livros de Filosofia](#)

[Baixar livros de Física](#)

[Baixar livros de Geociências](#)

[Baixar livros de Geografia](#)

[Baixar livros de História](#)

[Baixar livros de Línguas](#)

[Baixar livros de Literatura](#)
[Baixar livros de Literatura de Cordel](#)
[Baixar livros de Literatura Infantil](#)
[Baixar livros de Matemática](#)
[Baixar livros de Medicina](#)
[Baixar livros de Medicina Veterinária](#)
[Baixar livros de Meio Ambiente](#)
[Baixar livros de Meteorologia](#)
[Baixar Monografias e TCC](#)
[Baixar livros Multidisciplinar](#)
[Baixar livros de Música](#)
[Baixar livros de Psicologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Química](#)
[Baixar livros de Saúde Coletiva](#)
[Baixar livros de Serviço Social](#)
[Baixar livros de Sociologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Teologia](#)
[Baixar livros de Trabalho](#)
[Baixar livros de Turismo](#)