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Ranch under the rimrock

Dorothy Lawson McCall

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"It is a long jump from Beacon Street, Boston, to the homestead country of Central Oregon. In 1911, Section 21 was 640 acres of rattlesnake-infested sagebrush and juniper. Wild horses roamed that piece of land; coyotes prowled and howled at night. Even so, it was good, irrigable land, and the Crooked River flowed through it. The water rights plus the fine irrigation prospects sold 'Section 21' to my millionaire father. He, in turn, presented it to his daughter and son-in-law as a wedding present." And here Hal McCall built one of the finest dairy herds in Oregon, while wife Dorothy rode herd on five little McCalls--Tom, Harry, Bebs, Sam, and Jean--in a world of one-room schoolhouses, flooded rivers, and work in the hayfield. Here they had their own brass band, and their own newspaper. To this haunting country of infinite distance, endless rimrock, and solitary buttes, the McCalls brought far more than their Boston accent: The brought aggressive independence and a will to work that shaped up a magnificent ranch and inspired five impressionable youngsters. Were the stories told here fiction rather than the facts they are, we might be accused of exaggeration. Excitement and drama fairly tumble over each other. There are fires, floods, and jack-rabbit drives; threatened foreclosures, gunplay, and even a juvenile dude ranch. When Grandfather Lawson, the Cape Cod Copper King, comes to call, the action is stepped up because whenever "Pa" launched a new project, he did it in a grand manner, and there was nothing conservative about his ideas or his methods of developing them. He caught "pig fever" and went into hog raising: "It takes a cow mine months to have a calf. How many times a year do pigs farrow? I want action, Hal!" Meet Grandfather and scores of others absolutely unforgettable, from Colonel "Bill" Hanley and the local homesteaders to Tommy Pig and Luke Magluke, the Prineville center fielder.

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