

GOLDEN ARGOOSY

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DRAWN BY J. STEEPLE DAVIS.

THE GREAT BLACK LION, AS HE STOOD OVER THE PROSTRATE FORM OF THE KAFFIR CHIEF, LIFTED ONE PAW MENACINGLY, AND GLARED AT THE HUNTERS WITH TERRIBLE FURY.

See story "THE KAFFIR CHIEFTAIN," by Frank H. Converse, on next page.

you want repose. I leave you, the happiest, the most grateful of men. I will give your courteous message to Frank."

CHAPTER LXVI.
POOR FRANK.

CURIOSUS to learn what had passed between Beatrice and Frank, and deeply interested in all that could oust Frank out of the squire's good will, or aught that could injure his own prospects, by tending to unite son and father, Randal was not slow in reaching his young kinsman's lodgings.

"My dear fellow," said he, as soon as he had learned from Frank all that had passed on board the vessel between him and Beatrice, "I cannot believe this. Never loved you? What was her object, then, in deceiving, not only you, but myself? I suspect her declaration was but some heretical refinement of generosity. After her brother's detection and probable ruin, she might feel that she was no match for you. Then, too, the squire's displeasure. I see it all—just like her—noble, unhappy woman!"

Frank shook his head. "There are moments," said he, with a wisdom that comes out of those instincts which awake from the depths of youth's great sorrow—those moments when a woman cannot feign, and there are tones in the voice of a woman which men can misinterpret. She does not love me—she never did love me; I can see that her heart has been elsewhere. No matter—all is over. I don't deny that I am suffering an intense grief, and I feel so broken, too, as if I had grown old, and when I was nothing but worth living for. I don't deny all that."

"My poor, dear friend, if you would but believe—"

"I don't want to believe anything, except that I have been a great fool. I don't think I can ever commit such follies again. But I'm a man, I don't believe in fate; I don't despise myself if I could not, and now let us talk of my dear father. Has he left town?"

"Left last night by the mail. You can write, and tell him you have given up the marchesa, and all will be well again between you."

"Given her up? Fie, Randal! Do you think I should tell such a lie? She gave me up; I can claim no merit out of that."

"Oh, yes! I can make the squire see up to your advantage. Oh, if it were only the marchesa—but, alas! that cursed post-boy! How could Levy betray you? Never trust to a usurer again; they cannot resist the temptation of a speedy profit. First buy the son, and then sell him to the father. And the squire has such strange notions on matters of this kind."

"He is right to have them. There, just read this letter from my mother. It came to me this morning. I could hang myself, if I were a dog; but I'm a man, and so I must bear it."

Randal took the letter, and read it. It was Frank's trembling hand. The poor mother had learned, though but imperfectly, Frank's misdeeds from some hurried lines which the squire had dispatched to her; and she wrote, as good, indulgent, but sensible, right minded mothers alone can write.

More lenient to an imprudent love than the squire, she touched with discreet tenderness on Frank's rash engagement with a foreigner, but severely on his open defiance of his father's wishes. Her anger was, however, reserved for that unwholly post-boy.

Oh, Frank, Frank, were it not for this, were it only for your unfortunate attachment to the Italian lady, only for your debt, only for the errors of hasty, extravagant youth, which have placed my arms around your neck, kissing you, ending you back to your father's care. But—but the thought that has been in my heart has been the sorrid calculation of his death—that is a wall between us. I cannot care near you; I should not like to look on your face, and think how my Will would have smiled when you, you new born, in his arms, and bade him welcome his heir. What! you a mere boy still, your father yet in the prime of life, and the heir cannot wait till nature leaves him fatherless! Frank, Frank! this is so unlike you. Can London have ruined already a disposition so honest and affectionate? No; I cannot believe it. There must be some mistake. Clear it up, I implore you; or, though as a mother I pity you, as a wife I cannot forgive me.

HARRIET HAZELDEAN.

Even Randal was affected by this letter; for, as we know, even Randal felt in his own person the strength of family ties.

"Frank," said he, with a sincerity that afterward amazed himself, "go down at once to Hazledean—see your mother, and explain to her how this transaction really happened."

"No—I cannot go; you see she would not like to look on my face. And I cannot repeat what you say so glibly. Besides, somehow or other, as I am so dependent upon my father—and he has said as much—I feel as if it would be mean in me to make any excuses. I did the thing, and must suffer for it. But I'm a man—no—I'm not a man here."

Frank burst into tears.

"Pooh, my dear Frank," said Randal; "I have given you my advice; you reject it. Well, what then will you do?"

"I shall ask for leave of absence, and run away somewhere," said Frank, drying his tears.

"I can't face London; I can't mix with others. I want to be by myself, and wrestle with all that I feel *here*—in my heart. Then I shall write to my mother, say the plain truth, and leave her to judge as kindly of me as she can."

"You are quite right. Yes, leave town! Why not go abroad? You have never been abroad. New scenes will distract your mind. Run over to Paris."

"Not to Paris—I don't want gaieties; but I did intend to go abroad somewhere—any dull distasteful hole of a place. Good by! Don't think of me any more for the present."

"But let me know where you go; and meanwhile I will see the squire."

"Say as little of me as you can to him. I know you mean most kindly—but oh, how I wish there never had been any third person between me and my father! There; you may well snatch away your hand. What an ungrateful wretch to you I am. I do believe I am the wickedest fellow. What! you shake hands with me still. My dear Randal, you have the best heart—God bless you!"

Frank turned away, and disappeared within his dressing room.

"They must be reconciled now, sooner or later—squire and son," said Randal to himself, as he left the lodgings. "I don't see how I can prevent that—the marchesa being withdrawn—unless Frank does it for me. But it is well he should be abroad—something may be made out of that; meanwhile I may yet do all that I could reasonably hope to do—even if Frank had married Beatrice—since he was not to be disinherited. Get the squire to advance the money for the Thornhill purchase—complete the affair. This marriage with Violante will help;—Levy must know that; secure the borough;—well thought of. I will go to Avenel's. By the by—the by—the squire might as well keep me still in the entail after Frank—supposing Frank die childless. This love affair may keep him long from marrying."

Violante was naturally very uneasy with Frank's strong looking fellows often go off in a rapid decline, especially if anything preys on their minds—their minds are so very small. Al—The Hazledean parson—and with Avenel! That young man, too—who is he? I have seen him before somewhere. My dear Mr. Dale, this is a pleasant affair. This marriage with Violante to Hazledean with our friend the squire."

"The squire! Has he left town, and without telling me?" inquired Mr. Dale, who had just come up.

"He was anxious to get back to Mrs. Hazledean," replied Randal, taking the parson aside, "who was naturally very uneasy with Frank and this foolish marriage; but I am happy to tell you that that marriage is effectually and permanently broken off."

"How, how? My poor friend told me he had wholly failed to make any impression on Frank—forgot me to mention the subject. I was just going to write him, but I don't see how I could influence with him. But, Randal, explain this very sudden and happy event—the marriage broken off!"

"It is a long story, and I dare not tell my humble share in it. Nay, I must keep that secret. Frank might not forgive me. Suffice it was just going to write him, but I don't see how I could influence with him. But, Randal, explain this very sudden and happy event—the marriage broken off!"

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Mr. Dale shook Randal's hand warmly.

"You speak admirably, parson; but—so often as he has heard his father's opinion on such transactions! No—I will not let him—I should be so angry—"

Randal, leading the parson back, resumed, after an exchange of salutations with Avenel, who, meanwhile, had been conferring with his nephew. "You should not be so long away from my rectory, Mr. Dale. What will your parish do without you?"

"The old fable of the wheel and the fly. I am afraid the wheel rolls on the same. But if I am absent from my parish, I am still in the company of one who does me honor as an old parishioner. You remember Leonard Fairfield, your antagonist in the Battle of the Stocks?"

"My nephew, I am proud to say, sir," put in Mr. Avenel.

Randal bowed with a marked civility—Leonard with a reserve no less marked.

"You should be friends, you two youngsters," again interjected Mr. Avenel, ascribing his nephew's reserve to shyness. "Who knows but you run together in the same harness? Ah, that reminds me, Leslie—I have a word or two to say to you. Your servant, Mr. Dale. Shall be happy to present you to Mrs. Avenel. My card—Eaton Square. You will call on me to-morrow, Leonard. And mind I shall be very angry if you persist in your refusal. Such an opening!"

Avenel took Randal's arm, while the parson and Leonard walked on.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE KNEEL OF HOPE.

ANY fresh hints as to the Lansmere election?" asked Randal of his companion, as they strolled off together.

"Yes, I have now decided on the plan of contest. We must fight two and two—you and Egerton against me and if I can get him to stand, as I hope my nephew, Leonard, will do."

"What!" exclaimed Randal alarmed; "then, after all, I can hope for no support from you?"

"I don't say that; but I have reason to think Lord L'Estrange will bestir himself actively in

favor of Egerton. If so, it will be a very sharp contest; and I must manage the whole election on our side, and unite all our shaky votes, which I can best do by standing myself in the first instance, reserving it to after consideration whether I shall throw it up at the last; for I don't particularly want to come in, as I did a little time ago, before I had found out my nephew. Wonderful young man!—with such a head—will do me credit in the rotten old House; and I think I had best leave London, go to Mayborough, and look to my business. No; if Leonard runs, I must first see to get him in; and next, to keep Egerton out. It will probably, therefore, end in the return of one and one on either side, as we thought of before. Leonard on our side; and Egerton shan't be the man on the other. You understand?"

"You have an extraordinary head for public affairs, Avenel. You should come into parliament yourself; your nephew is so very young."

"So are you."

"Yes; but I know the world. Does he?"

"The world knows him, though not by name, and he has been the making of me."

"How? You surprise me."

Avenel first explained about the patent which Leonard had secured to him; and next confided, upon honor, Leonard's identity with the famous anonymous author of whom all England had been talking.

Randal Leslie felt a jealous pang. What! then—has this village boy—this associate of John Burley—(literary vagabond, who he supposed had long since gone to the dogs, and been long since the prey to some deeper fiend, this boy so triumphed over birth, rearing, circumstance, that, if Randal and Leonard had met together in any public place, and Leonard's identity with the rising author been revealed, every eye would have turned from Randal to gaze on Leonard?

And this same young stand on the same level in the ascent to power as he, the well born Randal Leslie, the accomplished protégé of the superb Audley Egerton? Were they to be rivals in the same arena of practical life? Randal gnawed his quivering lip.

All the while, however, the young man whom he envied was a prey to surges deeper far than could ever find room or footing in the narrow and stony heart of the unwinning schemer. As Leonard walked through the crowded streets with the friend and monitor of his childhood, confiding the simple tale of his earlier trials—when, amidst the want of fortune, and in despair, he had sought the shelter of the bar, like hope, all renowned seemed to him barren, all the future dark.

His voice trembled, and his countenance became so sad, that his benignant listener, divining that around the image of Helen there clung some passionate grief that overshadowed all his other joys, that Leonard gazed on him with a young man, long yearning for some confidant, told him all; how, faithful through long years to one pure and ardent memory, Helen had been seen once more—the child ripened to woman, and the memory revealed itself as love.

The parson listened with a mild and thoughtful expression, that led into a more cheerful expression as Leonard closed his story.

"I see no reason to despond," said Mr. Dale. "You fear that Miss Digby does not return your attachment; you dwell upon her reserve—her distant, though kindly manner. Cheer up! All young ladies are under the influence of what philosophers call the altered circuit of their preferences. Just as you describe Miss Digby's manner to you, was my Carry's to myself."

"Next," continued the parson, "you choose to torment yourself by contrasting your own original attachments with the altered circuit of Miss Digby—the ward of Lord L'Estrange. I view things differently. I have reason to do so; and, from all you have told me of this nobleman's interest in your fate, I venture to make you this promise, that if Miss Digby would accept your hand, Lord L'Estrange would ratify her choice."

"My dear Mr. Dale," cried Leonard, transported, "you make me that promise?"

"I do—from what I have heard, and from what I myself know of Lord L'Estrange. Go then, at once, to Knightsbridge—see Miss Digby—show her your heart—explain to her, if you will, your promise—ask her permission to tell Lord L'Estrange (since he has constituted himself her guardian); and if Lord L'Estrange hesitate—which, if your happiness is set on this union, I think he will not—let me know, and leave the rest to me."

Leonard yielded to the parson's persuasive eloquence. Indeed, when he recalled to mind those passages in the manuscript of the ill-fated Nora, which referred to the love that Harley had once borne to her—for he felt convinced that Harley and the boy suitor of Nora's narrative were one and the same; and when all the interest that Harley had taken in his own fortunes was explained by his relationship to her, the young man could not but suppose that the noble Harley would rejoice to confer happiness on the son of her so beloved by his boyhood.

It will be seen that Leonard had not confided to the parson his discovery of Nora's manuscript, nor even his knowledge of his real birth; for though the reader is aware of what Mr. Dale knew, and what he suspected, the manuscript had not once alluded to the parson; and the proud son naturally shrank from any confidence that might call in question Nora's fair name, until at least Harley, who, it was clear from

those papers, must have intimately known his father, should perhaps decide the question which the papers themselves left so terribly vague—whether he were the offspring of a legal marriage, or Nora had been the victim of some unhappy fraud.

While the parson still talked, and while Leonard still mused and listened, their steps almost mechanically took the direction toward Knightsbridge, and paused at the gates of Lord Lansmere's house.

"Go in, my young friend; I will wait without to know the issue," said the parson.

Leonard was shown into the drawing room, and it so chanced that Helen was there alone.

She rose hurriedly, and in great confusion faltered out, "that she believed Lady Lansmere was in her room—she would go for her," and moved toward the door, without seeming to notice the hand tremulously held forth to her; when Leonard exclaimed, in uncontrollable emotions which pierced to her very heart in the keen accents of reproach:

"Oh, Miss Digby—oh, Helen—is it thus that you greet me—rather than that you shun me? Could I have foreseen this when two orphans stood by the mournful bridge—so friendless—so desolate—and so clinging each to each? Happy time!"

He seized her hand suddenly as he spoke the last words, and bowed his face over it.

"You do not know," she said at last, struggling for composure—"you do not know the new claims upon me—my altered position—how I am bound—or you would be the last to speak—her lips writhed in torture, and she felt as if all other pain were light compared with the anguish that Leonard could impute to her motives which to her simple nature seemed so unworthy of her, and so galling to herself.

"Miss Digby," said Leonard, after a short pause of bitter reflection, in which he wringed, while her lips writhed in torture, and she felt as if all other pain were light compared with the anguish that Leonard could impute to her motives which to her simple nature seemed so unworthy of her, and so galling to herself.

"Brother!" she said, touchingly, "brother!"

The word had a contrary effect on Leonard. Swayed by the force of his fortune, she spoke it, it imposed a boundary to affection—it came as a knell to hope.

He recoiled, shook his head mournfully—"Too late to accept that tie—too late even for friendship. Henceforth—for long years to come—henceforth till the heart has ceased to beat at your name—no to thrill at your presence, we two are strangers."

"Strangers! Well—yes, it is right—it must be so; we must not meet. O, Leonard Fairfield, who was it that in those days that you recall to me—who was it that found you destitute, and obscure—who, not degrading you by charity, but by friendship, opened the way to you amidst the labyrinth in which you were well nigh lost, the broad road to knowledge, independence, fame? Answer me—answer! Was it not the same who reared, sheltered your sister orphan? If I could forget what I have owed to him, should I not remember what he has done for me?"

"But," faltered Leonard, fear mingling with the conjectures these words called forth—"but is it that Lord L'Estrange would not consent to our union—or of what do you speak? You bewilder me."

Helen felt for some moments as if it were impossible to reply; and the words at length were dragged forth as if from the depth of her very soul.

"He came to me—our noble friend, I never dreamed of it. He did not tell me that he loved me. He told me that he was unhappy alone; that in me, and only in me, he could find a comfort, a solace, a friend. And I had just arrived in England—under his mother's roof—had not then once more seen you; and—what could I answer? Strengthen me—strengthen me, you whom I look up to and revere. Yes, yes—you are right. We must see each other no more. I am betrothed to another—to him! I strengthen him, he strengthens me."

All the inherent nobleness of the poet's nature rose at once at this appeal.

"Oh, Helen—sister—Miss Digby, forgive me. You need no strength from me; I borrow it from you. I comprehend you—I respect. Banish all thought of me. Repay our benefactor. He will be as kind to you as I shall be to you. Happiness will come to you, as it comes to those who confer happiness and forget self. God comfort you in the passing struggle. God bless you, in the long years to come. Sister—I accept the holy name now, and will claim it hereafter, when I too can think more of others than myself."

Helen had covered her face with her hands, sobbing. A strange sense of utter solitude suddenly pervaded her whole being, and by that sense of solitude she knew that he was gone.

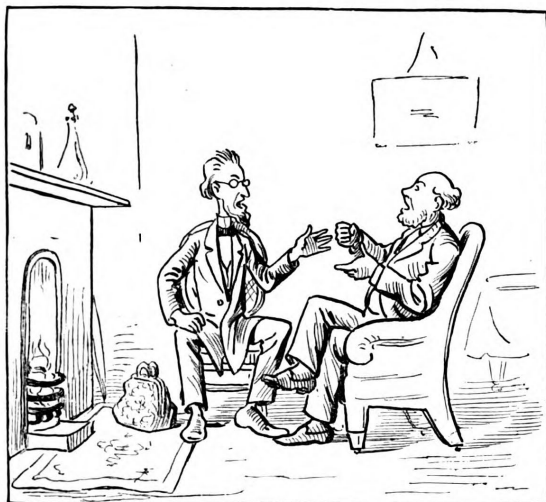
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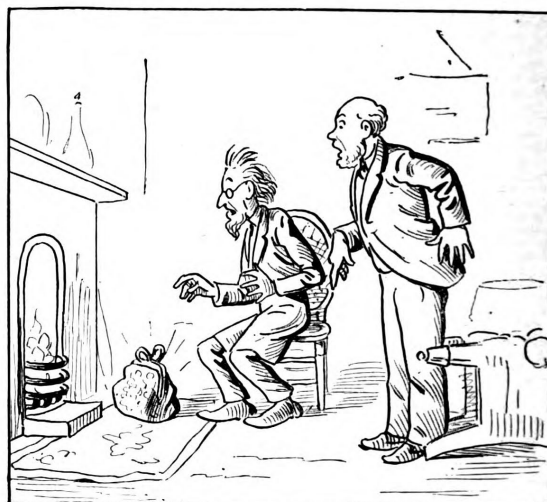
DEACON BUNGS BUYS A FEW BOTTLES OF BEER AT THE GROCER'S.



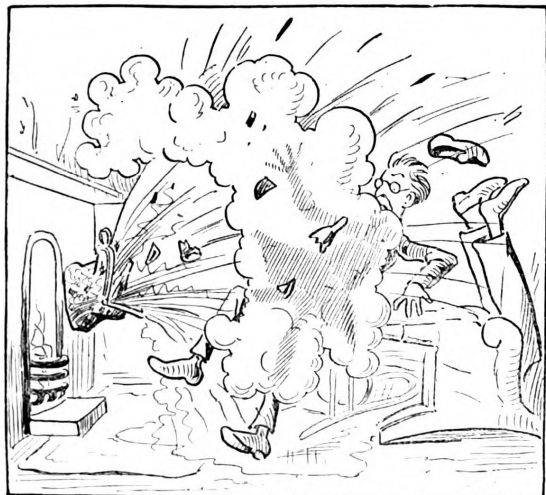
ON HIS WAY HOME DEACON BUNGS MEETS BROTHER JONES. BROTHER JONES INVITES DEACON BUNGS TO COME AND TAKE DINNER WITH HIM.



DEACON BUNGS PUTS HIS CARPET BAG DOWN, AND ENTERS INTO A DISCUSSION WITH BROTHER JONES ON TEMPERANCE. "DOWN WITH DRINK," SAYS BROTHER JONES. "RIGHT," SAYS DEACON BUNGS.



AT THAT MOMENT THE CARPET BAG EMITS STRANGE SOUNDS. "AH," THINKS DEACON BUNGS, "THE FIRE HAS SET THE BEER TO WORKING."



DEACON BUNGS WAS CORRECT. IT HAD.



"HENCEFORTH WE MEET AS STRANGERS," CRIES BROTHER JONES.

COULD WE RECALL THE PAST.

BY F. F. MURRAY.

COULD we but live the past again
How quickly from the tongue
Would fall kind words we felt unsaid,
Sweet songs we loved to sing;
And fancied cares that long ago
Their shadows o'er us cast
Would fade like passing thoughts away,
Could we recall the past.

THE
Gold of Flat Top Mountain.

By FRANK H. CONVERSE,

Author of "Heir to a Million," "That Treasure," "The Mystery of a Diamond," etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SPANISH MANUSCRIPT.

TOM FENWICK had fully made up his mind to leave his hiding place and deliver himself over to his pursuers rather than allow Phil Amsted to be arrested. But in vain did he tug and push and pull at the door of the secret chamber. The entrance closed with a spring, and Dolly had not explained how it could be opened.

"Hi! Hi! Hi!"
A wildly defiant shout, together with the galloping of mounted horsemen, called him quickly back to his loophole. And with a relief too great for expression, Tom saw John Bruton, leading at least a score of mounted cowboys, and spurting his bronco toward the ranch house.

He could also see the sheriff standing in an attitude of indecision before the veranda, while his men were beginning to gather about their horses.

"Put down the gun, sonny—'tain't no use to resist an officer of the law," the sheriff was saying. But at the same time he cast a very uneasy glance in the direction of the oncoming horsemen, who were whooping as only cowboys and Indians can.

"I guess I'll hang on to the gun till Uncle John gets here," blandly returned Phil. "Then I'll do as he says."

"What's the trouble here, any way?" John Bruton's voice rang out stern and deep, as, throwing himself impetuously on his panting horse, he strode forward.

"There ain't no call fer trouble, Mr. Bruton," responded the sheriff, whose tone seemed to moderate as he saw cowboy after cowboy flinging himself from the saddle, "none whatsoever. I'm pursuin' of my duty, an' come here with a search warrant for the boss thief that cut out er jail last night. I—"

"Didn't find him. So I see. There's no horse thief here—none been here. And I don't thank you for intimating that I'd harbor such a character."

"So, as he couldn't find him, Uncle Jack," put in Phil, with dancing eyes, "the sheriff allows he'll take me back on suspicion, because he thinks my voice is like a ducky's. I don't like to go back to Lovelville without arresting some one—wouldn't get his fees from the county, I suppose."

Clearly Phil Amsted was an adept at aggravation, as well as being cool and self possessed beyond his years. Mr. Bruton smiled grimly.

"Where's your warrant for an arrest on suspicion?" he demanded.

"The sheriff was nonplused. The formality of legal documents was often dispensed with in similar proceedings. But he was determined not to back down so easy.

"Here," he defiantly returned, resting one brawny hand on the butt of his pistol.

"Ah," was the unmoved reply. "Boys, you hear?"

They did—and there was a simultaneous clutching of firearms. Montez, with alarm in his looks, whispered something in the sheriff's ear.

"Just as you say. You're the prosecutor in the case, an' if you call a stay in the pardin's, all right."

This from the sheriff, with an effort to appear easy and unconcerned. And, motioning to his followers, he remounted. Then, rather crestfallen, they took their departure, followed by an exultant laugh from irrepressible Phil, who danced a wild breakdown, terminating with a double handspiring backward and forward, on the veranda.

Dolly lost no time in liberating her prisoner, who appeared considerably excited at something unconnected with the events which had been transpiring before the house. In one hand he held an old breviary or prayer book with tarnished silver clasps, in the other a crucifix some six inches long, evidently hammered from virgin gold.

"I found them in the queerest hiding place, Miss Dolly," he breathlessly exclaimed. "There was a brick loose in the wall under the little window. I joggled it out, and there lay these. Mr. Bruton was greatly interested. He for-

got the sheriff's raid and his own belligerent intentions, in the discovery. Life went on in a groove, generally speaking, with the residents of the Home Ranch, and anything out of the ordinary was welcomed effusively.

All gathered around, as having examined the crucifix, Mr. Bruton, with some difficulty unclasped the breviary. A folded parchment, yellow with age, fell out.

"Spanish," said Bruton, in disappointed tones, as he unfolded the latter; "and I've forgotten what little I ever knew of the language."

"Let me try," remarked Tom; "my chum aboard the yacht was a young Cuban, and I picked up quite a little Spanish from him. Perhaps I can make out part of it at least."

By dint of considerable guessing and study, Tom managed to give a fairly good translation for the benefit of his audience. I would say in passing that the transcription as given below is from the original MS. now—at least it was a year ago—in possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society:

PUEBLO EL MUERTE*, MAY 3, 1702, {
El Monte Plana Corona,
To the Worthy Superior of the Mission of St. Josef.

With this letter and my first report from this field of labor, where by the will of God I am sent, I forward, by the hands of a trusty Indian convert, my humble offering. The blessed crucifix I have wrought with my own hands, of virgin gold, hammered, from the quartz ledge forming the north wall of our pueblo. Here indeed is gold sufficient to make our holy order the richest in the whole world. But, as you know, this suffering, dying

got back on foot, suffering terrible hardships by the way."

The subject was a painful one. Dolly hastened to change it.

"But, father, I don't understand about this deserted pueblo. Who were the 'afflicted people,' and what ailed them?"

Mr. Bruton shook his head.

"No one seems to know exactly. Some say that they were exiled from one of the seven lost cities of Cibola by reason of a species of leprosy not unlike that known in the Sandwich Islands. It was contagious, and once stricken only death could release them. So, driven out from their own people, they finally took up their abode on the mesa now known as Flat Top Mountain."

"But if it is so inaccessible, how did they get up there in the first place?" asked Dolly, with unabated interest.

"I haven't the slightest idea. Only for this letter, I should have said the whole thing was a myth, as indeed most people have grown to think."

"What is the mountain like?" asked Tom. "I have only seen it from a distance. It is a mesa, rather than a mountain, in Southern Arizona. Only it rises perpendicularly from the plain five or six hundred feet high, and they say that even a mountain goat can't find a footing on its sides. The summit, several miles in extent, is presumed to be level. Streams of water fall over the top in two or three places, so of course there is more or less vegetation. But without a balloon



THE TWO YOUNG COWBOYS RETURN TO THE HOME RANCH.

people, among whom it was your pleasure to send me, are forever isolated from humanity, not only by the dread contagion of disease, but also the inaccessibility of the mesa itself. Our only communication with the friendly Moquis under Father Felipe's teaching is by lowering a basket more than five hundred feet to the base. Nineteen have died since my coming—but, thanks to the saints, they died in the true faith. Already the first stages of the fell malady are upon me, but I trust to be permitted to live till I shall have administered the holy rites to the last sufferer. In less than ten years we shall be extinct on earth, but alive in glory. I will report as permitted from time to time.

Ova Pro Nobis. FR. ANSELMO.

John Bruton could hardly contain himself to the end.

"So, then, Jim was no dreamer, after all," he exclaimed energetically. "Poor Jim! And I parted with him in anger almost, when over twelve years ago he started for a trip into Arizona—"

"Do you mean my father, Uncle Jack?" eagerly interrupted Phil.

"Yes. The legend of the Pueblo el Muerte, on Flat Top Mountain, or El Monte Plana Corona, is well known in these parts. But Jim somewhere heard that a ledge of gold bearing quartz of almost fabulous richness was said to exist near the depopulated pueblo. And all my ridicule failed to turn him from setting out in search of it."

There was a brief silence. Phil sat with parted lips—his eyes fixed expectantly on his uncle's face. Tom and Dolly waited with eager curiosity what further Bruton might have to say.

"There were three of them—Jim, Dutch Geary, and a fellow named Richter. Four months later Dutch Geary and Richter got back to Lovelville in rags, half starved, and nearly dead. I heard their story. They had been attacked by Indians at Salt River Forks, ten miles from Flat Top Mountain. Your father, Phil, was shot and thrown into the river. The two others escaped by the skin of their teeth and

"I don't propose to allow a fellow like Montez to drive me off or make me change my purpose a hair's breadth," he said with a certain air of determination, which his whole bearing carried out.

"Good for you!" exclaimed Phil, energetically. Dolly said nothing, but her eyes certainly looked her approval.

"Well, what is your purpose, my lad?" asked Bruton.

"I want to see whether I like the West well enough to live here," glancing—perhaps involuntarily—at Dolly's bright face framed in rings of short dark hair.

Sharp eyed Phil, who had caught the glance "on the fly," as he mentally expressed it, chuckled a little. Picking up his banjo, he sang in a very audible undertone:

"There was a young tenderfoot gritty
Who came from his home in the city,
To the far away West—and he liked it the best
Because its young girls were so pretty."

"Phil, aren't you ashamed?" said Dolly, in an energetic whisper. But the unabashed youth

I'm afraid the gold of Flat Top Mountain will stay where it is."

CHAPTER IX.

TWO YOUNG COWBOYS.

BUT the interest excited by Tom's curious discovery subsided after a while. The crucifix and breviary were put away among Mr. Bruton's curios, and the conversation turned to topics nearer home.

The incidents attendant upon Tom's escape and the search of the Home Ranch by the sheriff, of course, were the leading subjects.

"That Montez is as revengeful as an Indian," said John Bruton, curtly, "and, mark my words, Tom, he'll hunt you like a bloodhound till he runs you to earth."

"You'll have to go back to your stepfather, after all, I'm afraid," regretfully observed Phil, who was growing very fond of his new friend. Tom's lips tightened a little.

"I don't propose to allow a fellow like Montez to drive me off or make me change my purpose a hair's breadth," he said with a certain air of determination, which his whole bearing carried out.

"Good for you!" exclaimed Phil, energetically. Dolly said nothing, but her eyes certainly looked her approval.

"Well, what is your purpose, my lad?" asked Bruton.

"I want to see whether I like the West well enough to live here," glancing—perhaps involuntarily—at Dolly's bright face framed in rings of short dark hair.

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"There was a young tenderfoot gritty
Who came from his home in the city,
To the far away West—and he liked it the best
Because its young girls were so pretty."

"Phil, aren't you ashamed?" said Dolly, in an energetic whisper. But the unabashed youth

only winked in a knowing manner, while Tom, with slightly heightened color, went on:

"I've some money of my own in the East that mother left me, beside what I've got with me. If I found that I'd like the country—and it liked me—I might buy a small ranch and try cattle raising."

John Bruton shrugged his broad shoulders. "Don't try it in Nevada, whatever you do. The winters grow worse and feed more scarce every year. I'm talking now of selling out to a St. Louis syndicate—what do you think?"

"And going East, father?" cried Dolly, clapping her small hands.

"Not quite yet, dear. I have a notion of trying a year or two of ranching in Southern Arizona or even New Mexico first. There are no winters there, comparatively, and the grazing lands are better. But it is all uncertainty, any way."

"Mr. Bruton," said Tom, suddenly, "would you give me a chance with your boys on the ranch this winter?"

"So you've got the cowboy fever, eh?" laughed Bruton. "I'm afraid, though, you'd be terribly disappointed. Young fellows East form their ideas nowadays from the Buckskin Joes and Bronco Bobs of dime museums or side shows, and think all a cowboy does is to dress picturesque, ride a bronco, shoot buffaloes and fight Indians, with a little herding thrown in."

"I'm not such an ass," was the blunt response. "I want to rough it—to learn to ride and handle cattle. I then I should know something if I ever did own a ranch."

"That sounds more like business. Yes, I'll give you a show. Forty dollars a month and furnish your own outfit. And, if you like, you can start for the south range with the boys next week."

"Very good, sir." And thus the matter was settled.

"Of course you'll give me a chance if you do Tom?"

Phil was the questioner, and his uncle regarded him with a look of surprise.

"I'm afraid you're not tough enough for that sort of thing, Phil," he replied kindly. "And you don't think of buying a ranch some day, as Tom here does."

"I want to go with Tom, all the same. That is, if he'll let me."

"There's nothing I'd like better," was Tom's hearty reply, and Mr. Bruton finally gave a half reluctant consent.

Well, there was not much time to be lost. The sooner Tom was away, the better as regarded his personal safety. Even in the event of evading the vengeance of Montez, there was always the chance of his being run to earth by a detective anxious to secure the reward offered for Tom's apprehension by his stepfather.

The question of an outfit was easily arrived at. Deerskin leggings and hunting shirt, as being more useful if not so picturesque as the garb of the cowboy of the show, were furnished them by one of the ranchmen who was his own tailor. A "Sitson" sombrero, sold by weight at a dollar an ounce,

with a cartridge belt for a band; serviceable high boots, and a "slicker" or oilskin coat reaching to the heels, completed the wearing apparel.

Then came saddle, bridle, riata, blankets and a tarpaulin for protection in bad weather. To these was added the indispensable .45 caliber revolver, without which the cowboy's outfit is never complete.

Both new recruits could ride ordinarily well. Their broncos were picked out by Bruton himself from those trained especially for the herders' use; after which they were duly enrolled among the twenty or more preparing to start for the fall round up.

It is no purpose of mine to give in detail the experiences of their new life for the ensuing winter months. One reason for this is that prosaic fact is far less interesting than picturesque fiction, and the latter has thrown a sort of glamour about cowboy life which is very misleading.

The distinction between the true and the false is not made, that between the "lop hands" and the "drags"—to use the technical terms of the plain.

The former are the true "cowboys" of fact. Theirs is a life of routine work, with but little of incident or adventure. To them is delegated the selection of the best cattle to be driven to market, drive "cleaning out," and careful management of the vast to its way to the nearest railroad shipping point.

The "drags" are hired as a sort of understrappers for general utility work during three or four months. They perform guard duty, to prevent the herd from scattering or breaking up while on the drive. "Cleaning" being paid off, more or less of them drift to the abodes of civilization, arrayed after the wonderful manner familiar to the readers of dime literature which treats of border life. Here, as Cayuse Charlie or Wildfire Jim, such an one sometimes poses as an Indian slayer and bold, bad man who shoots on sight, thereby inciting adventurous youth to go and do likewise.

* Pueblo el Muerte—City, or town, of Death.

But as Tom had declared, no such motives had to do with his own choice. Nor had Phil any fanciful notions on the subject. The desire of being near the friend he had found, added to his restless, energetic nature, had decided him. And so, having made their adieus, they rode off behind the two big wagons containing provisions and bedding, Tom little thinking how and when they should see Dolly's face again.

CHAPTER X.

TERRIBLE NEWS.

FOREMAN, boss, cook, and riders, numbered some score of men in all. This included the day and night "wrangler," whose duties were to look after the spare ponies, of which half a dozen or more were delegated to each rider, so that a fresh horse was always available.

It was the last round up for the season, after which, instead of returning to the Home Ranch, the gang were to winter in a ranch house fifty miles distant, in the very heart of the Western wilds.

Tom preferred this, as he had determined to share all the hardship and discomforts of a rancher's life. Then experience would help him to decide as to his future action, and whatever Tom was willing to do, Phil acquiesced in.

So after the arrival of the outfit at the rendezvous, some three days from the time of leaving the Home Ranch, began a new and at first a rather exciting routine of life.

Every morning saw a gathering of more than a hundred and fifty mounted horsemen, from the various "outfits" assembled at the rendezvous around the general foreman's wagon.

Under the latter's direction, all hands start out for the "circle riding," in which the scattered droves are to be gathered in. By separate half dozens the riders work right and left along the creeks, driving the collected cattle to the "round up."

Then mounted on fresh horses the real work begins. Perhaps ten thousand belowing, vicious, half wild cattle are "rounded in" to one vast drove. Around this great congregation of constantly clicking horns and stamping hoofs the mounted cattle guards, or "drags," are stationed at intervals, to keep the cattle in check as far as possible. Then the different brands have to be cut out from the surging mass—a work attended with no little difficulty and danger. Each brand is "bunched" by the boys of the outfit to which it belongs—cows and calves together. Bulls, steers, and heifers are similarly gathered. Then the bunches are driven off to the range worked on the previous day and there guarded.

So day after day till the extent of country set apart for grazing has been worked over. Then men from each outfit drive their stock to the several home ranches, and the "round up" is over. Branding follows, after which the marketable beef is sorted out and driven to the nearest railway station for transhipment to the East.

A short season of rest ensues. Then the ranch house has to be made ready and provisioned for the winter months. There is fuel to cut and hay to store, and winter fodder. One horse only is kept for individual use; the others are turned loose to shift for themselves.

But oh, the monotony of those winter months! And the winter of that year will long be remembered for its extraordinary severity in the annals of the Western ranches. Binding blizzards and bitter cold, driving winter storms and furious gales alternated for days. Cattle perished by the thousands, and John Brown's losses were more than heavy—he was crippled by them.

Through it all, Tom and Phil did their own share of duty manfully. The former's memory made him a good story teller, and Phil of course had brought his beloved banjo. Thus the long evenings were whited away after a fashion. But with the first coming of spring our two young friends turned their faces toward the Home Ranch.

"I don't think I shall put any money into cattle raising," said Tom briefly, as he looked back at the log ranch, from the door of which one of the boys was waving a final adieu. "I don't think I would," was the pithy reply. And then with light hearts the two galloped on over the plain, all unconscious of what was even then transpiring at the Home Ranch.

On a sunny morning of May, two horsemen drew rein on the brow of a sloping elevation of land which was hardly elevated enough to be called a divide.

One of the two was broad shouldered and athletic in build. The other, though somewhat slighter, was snappy and wiry. The hair of each was long—their features darkened by a fairly good semblance of copper color by the action of the winter winds. A sturdy health and vigor, such as is given to the plainsman in no mean measure, was apparent in every movement. And their seat in the saddle was that of horsemen accustomed to hours and even days of hard riding.

That I am describing Tom and his friend Phil Amsted, will readily occur to the reader. Three days of travel had brought them within sight of the Home Ranch. Unslung his field glass, Tom took a long look at the distant buildings.

"Can you see anything of Dolly?" laughed Phil.

Tom colored even through his bronzing. But for a moment he did not answer.

"I don't see any one," he replied finally. "Not a soul stirring round the cattle sheds or the other outbuildings. Wonder where they all are!"

"Perhaps Uncle Jack is away on a hunt, and has taken the helpers with him."

"Perhaps so." Still on such a lovely morning Dolly herself would hardly care to be indoors. Yet there were no signs of the young girl on foot or on horseback anywhere in the vicinity of the ranch.

Tom shut his glass with a sharp snap, and returned it to the case slung across his shoulders.

"Hurry up a bit, Phil." And the two urged their horses down the rugged slope as fast as was compatible with safety.

"There's Dinah, any way," exclaimed Phil, as a portly, turbaned mulatto woman came out on the stoop. Shading her eyes with one fat hand, she peered anxiously at the two riders who came dashing up into the yard. "Bress us 'n' save us. It's dat we see Mars Tom 'n' Phil hisself. Howdy, boys? But oh Lawdy, dar's bad news—bad news! 'Light down, chillun—dat are lazy Bram'll take de hosses. Bram! What is you?"

Bram, a colored youth in ragged apparel, came shuffling round the corner of the ranch, as the news alarmed new comers leaped from their saddles.

"For Heaven's sake, what has happened, Dinah?" exclaimed Tom. For the mulatto woman sank heavily on a stool, and, throwing her apron over her head, began sobbing and sniffing hysterically.

"Dem Injins done carry Miss Dolly off, day 'fore yes'day! Mars Brum 'll 'bout crazy. Tuk all han's 'cept men Bram, 'n' lit out after 'em. But laws—dem reaskins got mor'n half day's start. Nebber see Miss Dolly no mo'—nebberr!"

Thus railed Dinah between hysteric intervals, while Tom and Phil looked at each other aghast.

(To be continued.)

Ask your newsdealer for THE GOLDEN ARGOSY. He can get you any number you may want.

THE END OF A MONSTER.

THE Great Eastern's doom is sealed. As the biggest ship afloat she has been from the start a failure, and she is now at Liverpool, where it is intended to break her up. The ARGOSY has received from time to time several inquiries regarding this "monster of the deep," many of which will doubtless be answered in the following extracts from a London paper.

The construction of the immense ship was commenced in May, 1854, at Millwall, under the direction of the eminent engineer, Mr. Isambard Kingdom Brunel, the original designer. The name at first given to her was "The Leviathan," which was changed to "The Great Eastern" when the ship was finished. The Eastern Steam Navigation Company having intended to employ this vessel in the Indian and Australian trade.

It was expected that the combination of screw and paddles, worked with steam power, with large sails carried by five or six masts, would be supremely advantageous. But the engines were insignificant compared with those in use at the present day. Those for the screw propeller were of 1000 horse power, and the paddle engines of 1200 horse power (nominal), while the screw was 24 feet in diameter, and the paddle wheels 50 feet.

The steam power was always deficient for the size of the vessel, which had a length of 691 feet, 83 feet width of beam, and a depth exceeding 60 feet, with a capacity of 22,500 tons burden—about twice the size, on the whole, of the largest ships that are now built.

It was Brunel's idea that this huge steamship should carry five or six thousand tons of coal, sufficient for the double voyage outward and homeward, which would save the expense of coaling abroad; but he, and the commercial men who employed him, apparently did not consider that there would be some uncertainty and delay in getting a cargo of 10,000 tons or more of coal in a single trip in a distant port.

As the result proved, such an amount of traffic was not to be obtained, and neither the voyage to New York, nor the voyage to Bombay, or to Melbourne were profitable to the owners. Passengers soon found that the Great Eastern was not a comfortable vehicle, in spite of her lofty airy staterooms and the extensive promenade on her deck. There was space enough to accommodate 4000 passengers of different classes, but those who embarked were only the few attracted by curiosity and novelty, and did not care to repeat the experience.

The only great and useful performance that this extraordinary vessel ever accomplished was in laying the Atlantic telegraph cable in July, 1866, and recovering a cable lost the year before. For some time she was exhibited as a show, and has been on view at New York, at Melbourne, and at New Orleans. Latterly, being no longer seaworthy, it was intended by a private purchaser to convert her into a coaling hulk at Gibraltar.

Her doom has now been uttered; she is to be broken up for old iron.

TWILIGHT DREAMS.

They come in the quiet twilight hour,
When the weary day is done,
And the quick light leaps from the glowing heaps
Of wood on the warm hearthstone.
My brow is calmed as with the touch
Of a passing angel's wing;
They breathe no word, yet my soul is stirred
By these messages they bring.
My heart beats not the rustling leaves,
Nor the rainfall's fitful beat,
Nor the wind's low sigh as it hurries by
On its pauseless path and feet.
And thus in the dusk they gather round,
These visions of the past—
Arising slow on the dim red glow
By the leaping hearth flames cast.

[This story commenced in No. 305.]

The Giant Islanders.

BY BROOKS MCCORMICK.

Author of "Nature's Young Noblemen," and "How He Won."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE RESCUE PARTY.

WHAT is going to be done, father?" he asked Landy Ridgefield, when he saw his father's preparations to attack the giant Indians.

"Our first duty is to save the party belonging to the Vulture from the savages who have beset them on shore," replied the captain, who was inclined to make a confidant of his son, though he required him to do his work like any other person on board.

"And I see how you mean to do it, father," added Landy. "But you will only prevent the Indians now at the new house from joining the others at the river."

"That is just what I wish to do; and when we have done it we will see what can be done for the captain's wife and daughter on the hillcock."

"There they come, father!" exclaimed Landy, as the captain was looking forward.

Captain Ridgefield went to the after gun on the port side, and sighted along the piece, as he had done before; and Livy Wooster stood at the lockstring to discharge the gun when the order was given, for he had been trained to this position in the drill.

The savages did not seem to be in a hurry, and they halted at the open space on the island which the captain had selected as the proper place to choose their advance to the river.

At this moment the captain gave the order to fire. A cloud of smoke enveloped the deck of the Albatross when Livy Wooster pulled the lockstring of the gun, and it was impossible to observe the effect of the shot at once.

But Lon Packwood, who was still in the main rigging, saw that the savages at the river were startled by the roar of the gun. At the same moment came a tremendous yell from the direction of the open space at which it had been aimed; and it was evident enough that the enemy had been fearfully startled and shaken up, whatever more serious result had been produced among them.

The smoke rolled away, and about every person on board had sprung to the rail, or mounted the rigging to ascertain what had been effected by the shell.

Not able to the astonishment of the captain and the others, a single savage was to be seen when the smoke blew in towards the shore, or not one who stood upon his feet, though one was spread out on the ground and another was crawling in the direction of the cottage.

The shell had exploded in the midst of the crowd of Indians, and those who were able to do so had evidently run away as fast as their legs would carry them.

"Which way have they gone, my man?" asked the captain, looking up at Lon in the rigging.

"I couldn't see any of them; but I think they have run into the bushes in the direction of the cottage," replied Lon. "The fellow who is wounded is crawling off that way, and he would be sure to follow the others."

The reasoning of Lon seemed to satisfy Captain Ridgefield, though he immediately went ashore in a single way to see for himself; but not a single savage could be seen, except the one who was stretched on the ground, and he was not likely to change his position.

"What is coming next, Landy?" asked Livy, as the captain's son came near him. "That is more than I know; but I think the Indians will not want any more shells," replied Landy.

"I hope something will be done for poor Mrs. Wellpool and Roxy," said Mrs. Ridgefield, coming up to her son at this moment.

"Can't something be done, Landy?" added Milly; and the faces of both mother and daughter exhibited the most intense solicitude, though the two families had not been on speaking terms for more than a year before their departure from Channelport.

"I don't know anything at all about it; you will have to ask father. But I am ready for one to go ashore and do all that can be done to save them," replied Landy. "I believe I could do it, too."

"You go ashore, Landy!" exclaimed the startled mother.

"Why not? I am willing to do my duty, and I am not afraid to do it either," replied Landy.

"I should like to go with you," said Boscock, who happened to be near enough to hear him. "There are four of us from the Vulture, and I believe we can do something to save Leck and Keeldon, as well as the women."

"I suppose father knows what he is about, and—"

"Every time!" interposed Boscock. "Father wants to make sure that the Indians from the direction of the cottage do not join the others; and I am sure he will not lose any time in saving the party on shore," continued Landy.

Boscock spoke to the captain, offering the services of all from the Vulture for the rescue of their shipmates, and the captain's wife and daughter.

By this time the captain was satisfied that the savages would not again attempt to cross the open space as long as the Albatross lay in his present position; and he was as impatient to do something for the relief of the party on shore as his wife and daughter.

"But I can hardly spare my men to go with you as long as those savages are likely to join their own people at the river; and they may do so by going farther into the interior of the island, out of the reach of our guns," said the captain, after he had accepted the services of the "vultures," as Landy called them, though without any disrespect.

"We don't ask for any of your men, Captain Ridgefield; I am willing to go with the three men of our crew," replied Boscock.

"Four of you is not much of a force to make an attack on twenty or more," suggested the captain. "As your boat will carry six very comfortably, and I think I can spare two of my crew, though I want to keep those who have been drilled in handling the guns."

"Just as you say, captain."

"I shall be on the lookout for you, and I can protect you if you are driven towards the shore; so that you must be sure that none of the savages get between you and the bay."

"Let me go, for one, father," said Landy.

"And me too," added Livy Wooster.

"You are not one of the gun crews, and I can spare you, Landy. But is your mother willing that you should go?" asked the father, glancing at his wife.

"Yes, I am willing that he should go," replied Mrs. Ridgefield, earnestly. "At first the thought startled me, but I think any one ought to do what he can do any good. Let him do his duty, whatever happens to him."

"Livy belongs to one of the guns, but I can spare him better than any other man," continued the captain.

"I will take his place, father, for I can pull that string as well as he can," interposed Milly.

"We shall still have six men on board, and it will be hardly necessary to call for female assistance until the situation becomes more desperate than it is likely to be," replied Captain Ridgefield.

"If Captain Wellpool's son had been such a fellow as Landy is, I should have been willing to do duty under his orders," said Boscock, as he walked to the waist with the captain.

"Landy is my son; but I try not to favor him on that account in our relations with the ship's company. Yet I have a great deal of confidence in him, and whenever I have called upon him for any important duty he has never disappointed me. For such an undertaking on shore as you have before you, I believe he has a decided talent," said Captain Ridgefield, with no little pride.

"Then give him the command of the party; none of us will object," suggested Boscock.

"No; I will not do that; you shall take the command, but you may consult him if you are so disposed."

"Boat from the Vulture," said Mr. Pitburn, at this moment.

Dunk Wellpool was the only occupant of the boat; but it did not appear whether or not he was coming to the Albatross.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE EXPEDITION UP THE RIVER.

ON board of the Albatross no particular interest was felt in the movements of Dunk Wellpool, though Landy and Livy had a sort of half-curious curiosity to know what the mate intended to do.

Boscock had hauled the boat from which his party had come from the Vulture to the main rigging, and had directed his three companions to take their places in it; then he directed Livy to take his seat on the fore thwart and pull an oar.

Taking his place in the stern sheets with Landy, they received the arms and ammunition for the expedition, which consisted of a rifle and a revolver for each person, and an abundant supply of cartridges.

The oars were dropped into the water, and the men were given the way with a will for Landy had suggested that they should reach the shore as soon as possible, before the savages had time to organize any new movement.

"Where do you think we had better land, Landy?" asked Mr. Boscock, as soon as the boat was in motion.

"I should say we had better go into the river, and follow it as far as we can," replied the captain's son, who had looked the situation over very carefully.

"That's a good scheme; and I wonder that our men did not follow the river as far as they could, though I suppose they were afraid of getting aground as they did when they left the cottage; and very likely that would have been fatal to them," added the chief of the expedition.

"I got a very good idea of the situation here while we was on board of the schooner," replied Landy. "Your men landed on the left bank of the river, which is the side nearest to the cottage. I wish they had chosen the other side, for then they would have had the river between them and the savages who were driven off by the shell."

"I don't think they had any time to consider which would be the best side for them, for they were hard pressed, after their retreat in the boat had been cut off. They took to the shore at the first point they could reach, which happened to be on the west shore of the island."

"I have no doubt they did the best they could, and I do not criticise their action. They have done splendidly to hold their own against at least ten times their own number," added Landy.

"Let the two bow oarsmen unship their oars, for we should move slowly now," called the chief. "Take the boat hook, Livy, and go to the stem where you can sound with it."

Livy obeyed the order, and soon thrust the boat hook down as far as his arm would reach.

"No bottom," replied he, drawing in the implement.

"That will do for the present then, but be ready to sound again."

A bend in the river gave them a better view of the situation of the besieged party on the hillcock, and one of them waved a colored handkerchief fastened to the muzzle of his rifle. The two men seemed to be in no particular uncertainty in regard to their situation, and looked as though they were taking things quite coolly.

"At this moment, the heavy report of one of the guns of the Albatross assured the party in the boat that the savages near the cottage had made another demonstration.

"That means that the Indians have made another attempt to cross the open space between the river and the cottage," said Boscook.

"And we have no idea of the result of the shot," added Landy.

"We shall soon learn something more about it, for if the first shot fails to drive the savages back, another will soon follow," answered the chief.

"They waited a few minutes for the report of another gun, and both the chief and Landy were satisfied that the first one had driven back the enemy.

"They can't get away from the island without that boat; at least without leaving a part of their men behind them," said Landy, watching closely the shore at the side of the boat. "I think it is easy enough to determine what their next move will be."

"What do you say it will be?" asked Boscook, looking into the face of the captain's son.

"They are coming over this way after that boat, and the next attempt will be made a good deal farther back than the last one, for they have found out by this time that a cannon shot will reach a long distance."

"That is just the idea that was working its way through my head," added the chief. "Now we had better see where we are. The hillcock where our party are defending themselves don't seem to be more than ten or fifteen rods from the river; and if we don't get aground we shall soon be very near it."

Livy heard this remark and used the boat hook again, while the two men at the oars continued to pull leisurely, as they had been instructed to do.

"No bottom," reported Livy again. "The boat hook and my arm give us at least eight feet of water."

"All right; keep a sharp lookout ahead, and you can see when we are coming to a shoal, but I shall not expect to find any out in the middle of the stream."

Boscook had hardly given the order before three arrows dropped into the water between the boat and the west bank of the river.

"Good!" exclaimed Landy. "Now we know where they are."

"And we are doing the very thing which the captain warned me against doing," added the chief, gazing intently into the trees in the direction from which the arrows had come. "The Indians are between us and the shore."

"My father knew nothing at all about the river when he warned you not to let the Indians get between us and the bay," said Landy.

"The river is our line of retreat, and while we have a boat and the enemy have none, we are in a condition to use it, and they are not."

"But what is to prevent them from going to the mouth of the river, and taking possession of both banks there?" asked the chief, with a smile.

"I grant that I am weak on that point," replied the captain's son candidly. "We ought to have taken possession of the boats."

"But we did not."

"We had no idea that the river was navigable even for our boat, and we did not think of it. I don't believe that these savages will go to the mouth of the river for the boats," added Landy.

"But it is quite possible for them to do so; and I don't think we ought to leave the possibility of a disaster open if it can be prevented," replied Boscook, shaking his head.

"It can easily be prevented," continued Landy. "We are in no desperate hurry to reach your people as long as the savages do not

make a decided demonstration against them. We are not a quarter of a mile from the mouth of the river, and we can easily do what we left undone when we did not understand the situation as well as we do now."

"What do you mean by that, Landy?"

"I mean that we had better return to the mouth of the river, and put the two boats there out of the reach of the savages," replied the captain's son, in a very decided tone.

Boscook said nothing for a minute or two; but he was looking about him all the time, and was evidently weighing the suggestion of his son. "I mean that we had better give them a couple of arrows fell into the water, as far short of the boat as the others had been; and they seemed to quicken the thoughts of the chief, for he picked up his rifle.

"I think you are right, Landy, and I shall adopt your suggestion; but I can see just where the Indians are, and we had better give them a volley or two before we go down the river, just to assure them that we are in condition to defend ourselves," said the chief as he took deliberate aim with his rifle and discharged it.

A yell from the Indians concealed in the dense undergrowth followed the report, and enabled every man in the boat to fix the locality from which it came.

"They are all around that tallest tree," said the chief, as he directed his men to open fire.

With the breech loaders, the boat's crew fired with great rapidity; and at the same time the two men on the hillcock took up the fire; but the Indians are, and will be better given them a volley or two before we go down the river, just to assure them that we are in condition to defend ourselves," said the chief as he took deliberate aim with his rifle and discharged it.

The Indians, with unusual stupidity, kept up an incessant yelling, which enabled Boscook to discover the fact that they were retreating from their position near the tall tree; and he was not disposed to waste his ammunition upon them.

"Now we must take our oars, all of you; and I want you to do your level best," said Boscook. "We ought not to be gone from this position long; and when we return we can have things all our own way, if nothing new turns up."

The chief took the tiller lines of the rudder, and the four rowers gave way with all their might, and they were good at the business, so that the mouth of the river was reached in a few minutes.

"This boat is too big and clumsy to be easily handled when we are in a hurry, and what to do with it is the question just now," said Boscook, when the quarter boat had come alongside of the rude craft of the enemy.

"I was thinking of that very question as we came down the river," added Landy.

"If I had an axe, I would soon make an end of it; but there are plenty of rocks on the shore, and we can sink it in the middle of the river," replied the chief.

"I think that will take more time than we ought to spare," continued Landy.

"What would you do with it, my lad?" asked Boscook. "We must fix it so that it will be of no use to the savages."

"Of course, and what you said about the current of the river gave me an idea of what it is best to do with it. It is getting dark, and the wind has died out; in fact I think there is a breeze coming up from the island. The sun has heated the soil on the island—"

"Never mind the philosophy, my lad; what would you do with the Indian boat?" interposed the chief laughing.

"I should row it out into the middle of the river, and turn it adrift," replied Landy.

"That is exactly the thing to do!" exclaimed the chief. "I did not think of that because the wind has been blowing on the island all the afternoon."

Both of the boats were shoved off the shore, and Landy was directed to get into the one belonging to the *Vulture*, while the Indian craft was taken in tow astern of it.

The men gave way again, and in a few minutes more the three boats were in the middle of the river, where the current could be seen by the direction of such sticks as happened to be floating on it.

"Let her go!" shouted Boscook.

Landy cast off the painter of the craft, while the chief turned the head of the boat up the river again, and the men gave way with all their might, as the officer urged them to do.

CHAPTER XXVI.
DUNK WELLPOL'S PERIL.

ANDY took his place in the stern of the boat, and gave his attention to the drifting in canoe of the Indians; and he soon satisfied himself that the craft was moving towards the middle of the bay.

"Boat ahoy!" shouted some one from the shore, on the west side.

Landy heard the call and replied to it; and he saw Dunk Wellpool come out of a clump of bushes, and walk down to the shore of the river.

"I looked to Landy as though he had landed in a little bay, behind a point of land, across which he had come, for his boat was not in sight; and so far he had not shown himself to the party in the boat."

"Come ashore, and take me in!" shouted Dunk.

"No!" shouted Boscook, loud enough to be heard half a mile. "Go back to the *Vulture*, or you will be taken by the Indians, who are only a little way from you!"

"I order you to take me on board of the boat!" yelled Dunk again.

"All right, Mr. Mate!" added the chief in a low tone. "I have warned you, and if you fall into the hands of the Indians, it will be your own fault."

Dunk continued to yell at the boat, but no further notice was taken of him, and he was left in his perilous situation. The four men at the oars in the boat pulled a stroke which soon brought the party to the position they had reached before; but the chief had some doubts in regard to the depth of the water in the unexplored part of the river.

He hauled up the boat in which Landy was seated, allowing the men to rest on their oars for a moment, and directed the captain's son to take his place in the bow of the leading boat, and attend to the soundings. Landy used the boat hook to sound with; but the water was nowhere less than three feet deep, and a good rate of speed was kept up till they were abreast of the hillcock.

At the moment when Boscook told the men to cease rowing, Leeks and Reeldon opened fire again, and it was evident that the savages could not be far away. Probably by climbing the trees or in some other way, they had been able to watch the movements of the boat which had descended the river and returned, and perhaps had followed it up the stream.

"The battle has opened again," said the chief anxiously, as he gave his attention to the two men who alone could be seen on the hillcock.

"Those men are not twenty rods from us, and you can tell by the way they aim where the Indians are," said Landy.

After careful consideration, the chief decided to land his men. The boats were hauled up to the side of the river, and the entire party went on shore, for all danger must come from the front or the right of them. Between the hillcock and the stream, there were fortunately but few trees which could conceal the movements of the savages, wherever they were.

The rifles and revolvers were put in condition for instant use, the former being fully supplied with cartridges; and thus prepared for the conflict, Boscook led his men towards the hillcock. The boats had hauled on the shore a little way so that they could be shoved into the water again without any delay.

The ground was a gradual ascent from the stream, and was covered with a dense growth of low bushes, though it afforded no shelter to the Indians from the rifle balls of the white men. When the party had made about half the distance to the hillcock, Boscook ordered a halt, for the two men on the little eminence had all at once ceased firing.

"What are we stopping for?" asked Landy, who was beginning to be impatient of the delay in commencing the attack upon the hillcock.

"I don't think it is safe to leave the space between the hillcock and the river open to the savages, for they may crawl in behind us, and dispute our passage on the return," replied the chief.

The men on the hill had stopped firing, and that indicates that they can see none of the savages, for I notice that they don't waste their ammunition; and by this time I don't believe they have any to spare."

"Lon Packwood, you and Lark Bidwell may remain here, while the rest of us go up the hill," said Boscook. "I want you to move up and down and keep your eyes wide open. If you see any Indians near enough to be dangerous, fire at them, and we will come to your assistance at once."

"All right, sir," replied Lon, as he and Lark took a position on the highest ground they could find.

The chief then directed them to separate and patrol the space between the hillcock and the river, and continued the march to the besieged party. They were but a few rods distant, but Boscook took the precaution to lead his men around the hill, and ascend it on the side next to the river, so that the Indians could not see him; though as far as he was able to judge the enemy were not near enough to see them.

Leeks and Reeldon, though they were doubtless delighted to see their friends approaching, said nothing to express their satisfaction at the arrival of the long expected assistance, for they feared the enemy might be near, though they appeared to have retreated from the vicinity.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Boscook," said Leeks, as the party came within speaking distance of him.

"You have made a good fight of it," answered the mate. "But we have no time to talk about it now. Where are the women?"

"We have kept them on the back side of the hill during the fight; but I wonder that we have not all been murdered and captured," added Leeks. "Mrs. Wellpool!" he called to the females.

The captain's wife and daughter rose from the same position, and both of them were as pale as though they had lost all the blood in their veins.

They walked timidly up the hill to the spot where the men stood, casting frequent glances in the direction from which the enemy had been seen.

"I am glad to see that you and your daughter are safe," said Boscook.

"Where is my husband? What does he mean by leaving us here all alone when he knew that the savages were all around us?" demanded the captain's wife.

"We stop to talk about it now, Mrs. Wellpool," interposed Boscook. "We are not out of the woods yet. If you and your daughter

will come with me we will do the best we can for you."

The chief formed his party in single file, and placed them on the side where the Indians were supposed to be, and then started for the boats, keeping well ahead of the captain's wife so that she could not relate her grievances to him. They had not reached the place where the two men had been posted as scouts, before the crack of a couple of rifles startled Boscook, and made him fear that the worst of the affair was yet to come.

"Lie down on the ground, both of you!" said he hastily to the woman and her daughter. "How do I know but there are snakes here?" demanded Mrs. Wellpool.

"Snakes or not, lie down, or you will get an arrow through your head," said the chief, so sharply that she obeyed him at once.

"The enemy are in here!" shouted Lon Packwood, pointing in the direction of the cottage.

"Are they coming this way?" asked Boscook.

"No, sir; they are all running towards the mouth of the river," answered Lon. "I could not tell which way they were going when we fired."

"Come this way, and join this file," added Boscook, as he called to the captain's wife and her daughter to resume the march.

The chief led the way again, wondering what the Indians would do next; but nothing more was seen of them before the party reached the boats.

Mrs. Wellpool and her daughter were placed in the boat in which they had come, and the two men who had been with them were assigned to it to take charge of them; but Leeks was instructed not to go into danger without a special order, and to keep on the farther side of the river.

"What are you going to do now, Mr. Boscook?" asked the captain's wife after she was seated in the boat.

"We are going to get out of the river, if we can," replied the chief, rather curtly, for he had never been very partial to the lady.

"But we have only two men in this boat, and there are six of you in the other. I want more men in the boat with me," persisted Mrs. Wellpool.

"Give way, Leeks!" said the leader sharply to the stroke oarsman of the other boat.

Leeks and his companions began to use their oars, but the lady forbade them to do so.

"That's the mate, ma'am, and I must obey orders," replied Leeks, as he continued to row, without giving further heed to the virago, for that was what all hands knew she was.

The other boat took the middle of the river, and both the chief and Landy kept a sharp lookout on the left bank, though not a single savage showed himself within rifle range of the stream. When the boats were approaching the mouth of the river, they heard a fierce yell, which indicated that the savages had moved in this direction, and that they were in force in this locality.

"My gracious!" suddenly exclaimed Landy, springing to his feet. "There is Dunk Wellpool!"

"I had forgotten all about him," added Boscook, quite as much excited as his companion in the stern sheets.

Dunk was running towards the river, pursued by three of the stalwart Indians, whose legs were altogether too long for the new mate of the *Vulture*.

It looked as though they had suddenly come upon him, and taken him by surprise, for they were not far behind him; and his attempt to escape was a failure.

The three Indians who were after him pounced upon him all in a heap, and Dunk went down under them with a scream of mortal terror.

(To be continued.)

Ask your newsdealer for THE GOLDEN ARGOSY. He can get you any number you may want.

LAST OF THEIR RACE.

THE buffalo, whose almost total destruction from off the Western plains has been mourned for several years, may perhaps not be so nearly extinct as is supposed. In Dakota, once a favorite stamping ground for them, none have been seen for a long time, but at least one herd has appeared there this year, according to the *Bismarck Herald*, which reports:

Sportsmen were very much interested in the report brought in recently to the effect that a herd of fifty buffaloes were seen sixty miles north of here, on the bank of the Missouri River. John Whitely, a hunter, says that he saw the herd and killed one of the animals. While the animals were stampeding to the river for water, Whitely narrowly escaped being caught in a narrow ravine and trampled upon by the thirsty beasts. The buffaloes swam the river and started in a north-westerly direction from the western bank.

This is the first herd seen in Dakota for over five years, and it is supposed that they have been driven from the Northwest Territory by hunters. A large number of settlers have started in pursuit, in hopes of capturing the game.

ACTIVE INDOLENCE.

Mr. AGLEY to Mr. Stoutman, after a hard run for a street car—"By Jove, old boy! I thought you were too lazy to run like that."

Mr. STOUTMAN (languidly)—"Easily explained, my dear boy; laziness runs in our family."



The subscription price of the ARGOSY is \$2.00 per year, payable in advance.

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In ordering back numbers include 6 cents for each copy. No rejected Manuscript will be returned unless stamps accompany it for that purpose.

FRANK A. MURPHY, PUBLISHER,
81 WARREN STREET, NEW YORK

A GREAT STORY.

It is the editor's duty to blow the trumpet and proclaim the wares he has to offer to the public. Our trumpet on this occasion should be a loud one indeed, for never before in the history of THE ARGOSY have we had such an important announcement to sound forth. Elsewhere on this page will be found a forecast of the complete revolution of the paper's make up, and of the splendid array of literary and artistic attractions that the new volume will contain. One of the greatest of these is a new and remarkable story which will commence next week. It is entitled

THE PRISONERS OF THE CAVE,

BY OLIVER OPTIC,

Author of "The Young Pilot of Lake Monteban," "Making a Man of Himself," etc., etc.

The famous author has never written a better or more stirring story than this. It deals with an entirely new field, and differs in many ways from any of his previous works. The scene is laid in the caves and canyons of the Sierra Nevada, where the young hero goes through some strange adventures among the giant powers of Nature and the wild inhabitants of the rocky fastnesses. The characters of Harold Rossmere, and his companion Val Legall; of Amos Winscribed the miser; of Grete Hinchman, the giant of the island, and his fair young adopted daughter; of Captain Chuffer and his band of outlaws—these are depicted with all the author's well known dramatic skill, while their adventures in the vast mountain cavern and on the mysterious underground river are most novel and exciting.

"The Prisoners of the Cave" is one of the very best stories THE ARGOSY has ever published, and one which all your friends would enjoy reading.

The Title Page and Index to Volume VI is now ready, and will be sent free to any address on receipt of a stamp for postage.

THE BOOK OF THE SEASON.

The criticisms upon "The Boy Broker" have been full of unmixd praise for its literary merit and its artistic excellence. Indeed, the volume has sprung at a bound into popularity and success, and has already taken rank as the finest gift book of the season. Those who have not seen a copy of it should send in their orders promptly, before the supply is exhausted.

Next week's number will cost Ten Cents.

BOUND VOLUME VI NOW READY.

Volume VI of THE ARGOSY is now ready, and an exceedingly handsome volume it is. Bound in cloth sides with leather backs and corners, and containing 836 pages, it is one of the largest and finest gift books of the season. It comprises seventeen complete serials, over a hundred illustrated short stories, more than fifty portraits and biographical sketches of eminent men, and a vast variety of articles on sports, games, and military matters, editorials and other short items. It is embellished with about five hundred fine engravings, and altogether is a complete mine of treasures for boys and girls. It can be ordered from any book seller or newsdealer, price \$4, or will be sent from this office on receipt of the price—expressage to be paid by the receiver.

A BEAUTIFUL CHRISTMAS ISSUE.

FORTY EIGHT PAGES including cover, all of which are lavishly and most artistically illustrated. An effort never before approached; never before dreamed of in juvenile literature.

A superb issue with which to enter upon Volume VII—an issue bristling with new things and printed in handsome colors. A Weekly Magazine from now on, with pages cut and stitched. No advertising will hereafter appear on reading pages. THE ARGOSY in its new form will be a perfect book when bound, with nothing to mar the beauty of its pages.

The word "GOLDEN" will be dropped from the title after this issue; "THE ARGOSY" plain and simple will be the title hereafter. The following is the new heading:



OUR CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

Next week's issue of THE ARGOSY will be the Christmas issue. It will be a surprise to every one, not only because of the changes in form and name, but more especially because of the unprecedented beauty and merit of the number. Never before has anything for boys and girls approaching this issue in excellence been attempted.

With its forty eight pages including cover, printed in various colors and most especially ornamented with between thirty and forty illustrations, it will present a degree of attractiveness unknown to juvenile literature.

Judging from the efforts of publishers the world over, they evidently think anything very ordinary is good enough for boys. Accordingly they spend their money lavishly on costly illustrations, and such we will present to the great world of young readers next week, in the improved form of THE ARGOSY. THE NUMBER WILL COST TEN CENTS.

It seems to us that this thing has gone on long enough, that it is now time to give the boys and girls something fully as meritorious as the publications designed for their fathers and mothers, and such we will present to the great world of young readers next week, in the improved form of THE ARGOSY. THE NUMBER WILL COST TEN CENTS.

WHY WE HAVE CHANGED OUR NAME.

There are several reasons why we have dropped the word "Golden" in our title. The first is, that it was not necessary, as we always speak of the paper as THE ARGOSY. Again, "The Golden Argosy" sounded too much like the nursery—too much like a "nabby pabby" "goody goody" sheet, such as very small boys and girls delight to read. THE ARGOSY, simply, has a manly ring—a vigor and dash characteristic of the tone of the paper. "The Golden Argosy" suggests fairy tales and infantile stories, while THE ARGOSY alone savors of boating and adventure—of tales to quicken the pulse of brave bold boys whose blood runs warm in their young healthy bodies.

The word "Golden" is in great disrepute with us so far as the heading to this paper goes. The old title has led people to suppose the paper is intended solely for small children. Nothing could be further from our purpose, as you and all readers know. Without doubt, however, this word "Golden" has kept many boys and young men from reading the paper, simply because they did not like to be classed by those who happened to see them with the small boys who read fairy tales and nursery stories. We confess to having been provoked many times ourselves when on meeting a stranger and referring to the paper he would reply "Oh, yes, 'The Golden Argosy,' a child's paper." Well, he was not to be blamed, as the title really suggested the thought to him; "The Golden Argosy"; golden—nursery; golden—fairy tale; golden—small boy.

OUR NEW FORM.

THE ARGOSY in its new form will consist of not less than thirty six pages every week, including the cover, and many times it will be even larger. The paper will be more than one third heavier than the grade used on the old form. It will be more highly finished, and will enable us to print our illustrations as finely as those of the very best magazines. And the illustrations will probably number about twenty five in each issue—three times as many as we now publish. The pages will be stitched and cut, and many new features will be introduced, an outline of which will be found below. A very pretty cover, with designs varying from week to week, and printed in colors, will be a part of our new form. In short, commencing with Volume VII, THE ARGOSY will be a beautiful weekly magazine. It will be suitable to bind up into very handsome books. No advertising will be allowed on reading pages. Our purpose is to make it thoroughly artistic and refined in every respect.

NEW FEATURES.

OUR SERIAL STORIES

will continue to be one of the leading features of THE ARGOSY. They will, however, rank higher than ever before, and will be much better brought out than formerly. Hitherto we have usually given to each serial from five to seven illustrations, mainly confined to the first half of the story. In future every serial will be fully illustrated throughout, with from thirty to forty drawings by first rate artists.

A PUZZLE DEPARTMENT.

Beginning next week, we shall introduce a Puzzle Department, or, more properly speaking, a department of illustrated problems. This will include not the old, stereotyped series of anagrams or acrostics, but a selection of the best, newest, and most original puzzles, pictorial, mathematical, and of many different kinds. It will be interesting to a wide class of readers, who will find in it such various tests for their ingenuity. Prizes, too, will be offered for the best original problems.

COMIC SKETCHES.

Much more attention will be paid henceforth to the humorous side of THE ARGOSY, and the pens of the leading "funny men" will help to provide for our readers many a healthy and delightful laugh. The number of comic drawings will be largely increased, and a humorous serial is a probability of the near future.

HELPFUL ARTICLES.

Great pains will be taken to make THE ARGOSY helpful, as well as fascinating and amusing, to its readers. We shall constantly publish articles on various practical subjects, giving hints and instructions for the making of useful things, the learning of valuable arts, and other kindred topics. These will commence next week with a series of papers on "Amateur

Photography," by a well known expert on that deservedly popular study.

MISCELLANEOUS MATTER.

Miscellaneous matter, such as biographical sketches of leading men, editorials, poems, and so forth, will be continued and presented in even a more attractive form than heretofore. With the commencement of the new volume we shall start a series of biographical sketches of noted lawyers. This series should prove unusually interesting to all readers, for the subjects will include many of the most prominent and popular men of the day, and the recital of their upward careers cannot but be beneficial to those who are entering upon the battle of life.

A GREAT OPPORTUNITY.

BOYS, here is your chance to get some good reading free, for the simple trouble of showing our CHRISTMAS NUMBER to your friends who are not acquainted with THE ARGOSY.

HERE IS THE LIST OF FREE BOOKS:

"A VOYAGE TO THE GOLD COAST; or, JACK BOND'S QUEST," by Frank H. Converse.
"THE BOYS IN THE FORECASTLE; A STORY OF REAL SHIPS AND REAL SAILORS," by George H. Coomer.
"BARBARA'S TRIUMPHS; or, THE FORTUNES OF A YOUNG ARTIST," by Mary A. Denison, is a pathetic and delightful tale.
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"JACK WHEELER; A STORY OF THE WILD WEST," by Captain David Southwick.
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These premium books are very neat volumes, including only the best stories of standard authors, and at least equal in every respect, except the binding, to the ordinary \$1.25 books. Now we make you the following offer: For every copy of next week's paper that you sell to persons who are not now readers of the ARGOSY we will give you any one of the above books. If you sell one copy, you will get one book; if you sell ten copies you will get ten books. You must, however, send THREE TEN CENT STAMPS to pay postage and packing on each book, or no premium can be sent.

You can order the extra papers from your newsdealer, or you can get them direct from this office by sending TEN CENTS for each paper.

NOTHING IS LOST.

Nothing is lost: the tiniest seed,
By wild birds borne or breezes blown,
Finds something suited to its need,
Wherein 'tis sown and grown.
So with our words: or harsh or kind,
Uttered, they are not all forgot;
They have their influence on the mind,
Pass on, but perish not.
So with our deeds: for good or ill,
They have their power, scarce understood.
Then let us use our better will,
To make them rife with good.

"Plucky Joe."

BY CAPTAIN HENRY F. HARRISON.

MURRAY and Fuller were bankers in a small way at Oro City, Nevada. They had a branch office in Denton, the nearest railway station, sixty miles distant. And one morning the oldest partner, Mr. Blair, wired them from Denton, that Defries, the other one, had "lit out" (I quote from the telegram) with fifty thousand dollars—probably by the midnight train to Denver.

This was bad in itself. Particularly in view of the fact that Murray and Fuller had two notes in the Denton bank which if not paid at noon of the following day would go to protest. Now to have a note protested was, in the eyes of Murray and Fuller, a most serious affair. It would, they reasoned, not only shake their credit but materially affect the public confidence in their integrity.

They had abundant means in their Oro City office. How to get it to Denton in time was the question. Two stages a week only, and alas one had set out only the day before.

"Send Joe with it on Chieftain," suggested Mr. Murray.

Joe Patch was a bright young fellow in their employ, who had been brought up on a ranch owned by the former. Chieftain was a Kentucky horse raised on the same ranch. And the horse Joe Patch couldn't ride—and ride well—had never been foaled in that part of the country. So at least said Mr. Murray, who himself told me the story.

Joe expressed himself as ready and willing to start at ten minutes' notice, which he did, with twenty seven thousand dollars and Mr. Murray's revolver in his pocket.

Well, as Joe expresses it, at first it was a regular picnic for him. The ride, the scenery and the responsibility—each and all had their attractions. A very pleasant spoken gentleman—Mr. Smith, agent for Baker & Co., bankers at Denver, joined him and rode quite a little distance toward Denton. He had heard of the Defries defalcation, he said, and incidentally Joe mentioned his errand. This was just before the two reached the half way station at Cayuse Bend.

The stage from Denton to Oro City stopped there to change horses. It had just arrived as Joe and Mr. Smith rode up to the wretched little log cabin where fried bacon and hot saleratus biscuit were served out to the hungry passengers at a dollar a head.

Joe was not hungry, but Chieftain must have his mouth sponged out and a chance to cool off a bit. But imagine the young messenger's distress when he went round to the "lean-to" serving as a stable to find that Chieftain had suddenly become dead lame!

Poor Chieftain could not even bear his foot on the ground, and there was no blacksmith within a dozen miles to see if the shoe itself was at fault. There was nothing to do but for Joe to take the stage back to Oro City and tell Messrs. Murray and Fuller of his hard luck. For not a horse or conveyance of any kind could he hire to continue his journey to Denton, for love or money.

Mr. Smith, who was a pleasant spoken man with a dark smooth face like a Spaniard's, expressed himself as very sorry for his young friend's misfortune. He himself—so he said—was not going directly to Denton, or he would willingly have taken charge of the money—that is, if Joe would intrust it to him. But it could not be helped, and so, heavy hearted enough, poor Joe consigned Chieftain to the tender mercies of the hostler—promising to send further directions back by next stage. Then he

mounted the box beside the driver, who cracked his whip, and away they went toward Oro City.

There were a dozen passengers inside—cattle drovers, mining experts and non-descripts generally. One better dressed than the rest spoke with a foreign accent, and wore blue glasses, which with his blonde hair and beard gave him the look of a German professor.

Poor Joe! Never had he felt so sore and discouraged. It was no fault of his, but he knew how badly his employers would feel at the failure of his mission. "Curi's yer hoss should hev struck lame so all of a sudden," said the good natured driver, to whom Joe had confided his troubles, "but—"

"Stop!" In the voice of a stentor, the command was shouted from a bunch of manzanitas at the roadside. Simultaneously

"None of that, my lad! Out with your wallet and drop it down here! Or else—"

The muzzle of the big revolver pointed directly up in his face suggested the rest. And one by one a shower of wallets and pocket books were being tossed from the stage interior into the road.

With a groan from the very bottom of his boots Joe obeyed. The highwayman picked up his plunder, which he shoved into his capacious pockets.

"No treasure box I believe this time, driver. No! Very good. Here, you with the blue spec's! What's that you're shoving into your stocking leg?"

"Nicht verstehen," muttered the unhappy man as the road agent stepped to the side of the stage.

"Oh, yes, you do—you understand perfectly well. Hand over; and—look here!"



THE ROBBERY OF THE ORO CITY STAGE.

appeared a broad shouldered, bearded man, the upper part of whose face was hidden by a black mask. In either hand he held a heavy revolver—one of which was pointed at the driver long enough to suggest the instant stoppage which at once took place.

Half a dozen pistols were drawn by as many of the inside passengers.

"Gentlemen," cried the highwayman in a voice which sounded strangely familiar to Joe, "my pardner is covering you with a double barrel loaded with buck shot. And buck shot do scatter tremendously! Toss those guns into the road! Quick!"

Nobody saw the "pardner," but imagination peopled the manzanitas with road agents and weapons. Every revolver was dropped. Every face paled—except Joe's, who had forgotten that he had a weapon. His face alternately flushed and paled. His employers' twenty seven thousand dollars! And he made a movement toward his breast pocket. If he could only push the big wallet under the cushion!

Thus saying the road agent coolly yanked a huge blonde beard from the foreigner's chin and jerked his spectacles off very rudely.

As pale as death, the man thus undisguised, if the expression is allowable, produced a bulky envelope from his stocking leg and extended it in his shaking fingers.

"Gentlemen," said the stage robber mockingly as he tucked away the envelope, "let me introduce your fellow passenger—Mr. Lewis Defries, absconding partner of Blair and Defries, of Denton. Good morning!" And plunging into the underbrush at the side of the road the speaker disappeared.

Poor Joe, completely stunned at the magnitude of his own misfortunes, had sat through it all dazed and bewildered till he heard the parting address of the gentlemanly road agent.

Lewis Defries! And now the highwayman had in all probability over seventy thousand dollars of Murray and Fuller's money—

"Hi there, stop, sonny!" shouted the

driver, as, without pausing, Joe dropped into the road, and made a break through the heavy growth in the direction taken by the stage robber.

But Joe heard nothing, only the distant steps crashing through the fallen timber—thought of nothing but overtaking the man who had his employers' money! He was sixteen years old, sinewy and athletic for his years. Moreover, he suddenly remembered Mr. Murray's revolver.

Pulling it from his pocket, Joe held the weapon in readiness. Its very possession gave him a sudden coolness and resolution. His nerves steadied and his half defined purpose became a fixed determination.

Pausing for a moment to listen, he heard the footsteps ahead suddenly stop. Joe also stopped and quietly slipped off his shoes. Then as stealthily as an Indian he stole forward.

He heard voices, or a voice at least. Then a low laugh of evident amusement.

"It's his partner," thought Joe with a great feeling of disappointment, "and they're chuckling over their luck." Joe had hoped to meet the man by himself. Then—

Parting the leaves, Joe saw in a clearing a horse whose bridle was thrown carelessly over a bush. And the horse was the counterpart of the one ridden by pleasant spoken Mr. Smith, agent for Baker & Co., the Denver bankers.

And Mr. Smith himself was tucking a pair of false whiskers into one of the empty holsters of the saddle. Moreover he was alone—talking to himself.

"Oh, what a haul," laughed this merry gentleman. "The best I've made by far. And not a soul to have to share with, except my imaginary partner with the double barrel. Well, the devil *does* help his own, surely."

Here Mr. Smith seated himself on the greensward, unbuckled a belt, to which two heavy revolvers were suspended, and tossed it carelessly beside him on the turf. Then he emptied the pockets of his rough pilot cloth coat.

"To think I should have taken Lewy Defries's plunder," went on Smith in audible soliloquy. "That is rich. I knew him by the scar on his cheek that changes from blue to red when he's excited, the minute I neared the coach. Sorry, though, for the boy on the seat, but—"

A sharp click stopped his speech in an instant. Dropping the wallet he was about to open, Mr. Smith raised his eyes and extended his hand toward his revolver belt at one and the same moment.

"Stop!" Unconsciously echoing the stage robber's own menace of a little before, Joe stepped forward pistol in hand. His face was pale, but with excitement, not fear, and his voice rang out clear and firm.

"I'll put a ball through your head if you stir a finger till I tell you."

And Smith evidently felt assured in his own mind that the speaker meant exactly what he said.

"Well, what is it?"

Smith spoke with perfect coolness, yet an undercurrent of something else was discernible in his tones.

"Take up that pistol belt—by the buckle, mind—and toss it to me."

"Upon my word, you're a cool one." And Smith hesitated.

"I'll count three. One—two—"

"Take it then—hang you." Only the stage robber used a far stronger expletive. And his face grew black with rage, as he realized his humiliation at the hands of a mere boy.

Without changing the position of his pistol or taking his eyes from the other's face, Joe stooped down and with his left hand drew one of the heavy revolvers from its belt sheath. Cocking it with his thumb he aimed on a line with the other. "Now turn your coat pockets inside out. Very well. Right about face!"

"Oh, you young imp!" hissed the other between his teeth. But he obeyed.

"Forward march. And if you as much as turn your head—"

A confused sound of voices in the rear checked Joe's threat.

"Come on—he's somewheres in this

way," shouted a hoarse voice. Heavy steps came crashing through the underbrush.

Smith uttered a smothered exclamation and bolted. When or where he stopped running is uncertain. But not anywhere within pistol shot—rest assured of that.

When six of the passengers, shamed by Joe's example into something like courage, broke into the clearing, it was to find Joe Patch with a pile of wallets and note cases heaped up beside him on the greensward. The one taken from himself, as also the envelope recovered from the defaulter's stocking, Joe appropriated after a brief explanation. Then each reclaimed his own, after which they returned to the highway—Joe leading Mr. Smith's horse which, with its revolvers, was unanimously voted to his brave young conqueror.

That Mr. Lewis Defries was not in the coach on their return goes without saying. Perhaps he had departed in search of Mr. Smith.

However this may be, the State saw neither of them more. The notes were duly taken up, Joe received five hundred dollars for his exploit, and the Oro City *Black* complimented him in a most flattering manner. Since then he has always gone by the name of "Plucky Joe."

[This story was commenced in No. 305.]

→ Bob Lovell; ←

THE YOUNG FIREMAN OF THE AJAX.

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS,

Author of "The Haunted Engine," "The Star of India," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RAFFLED AGAIN.

BOB LOVELL might have felt some misgiving about meeting Hemitate Ox face to face, at this late hour, in the deserted street, but for the pleasant words the man had spoken to him that morning. As it was, he made him a half military salute as they met under the lamp, and said, "Good evening, sir."

"How do you do?" replied Ox, extending his hand; "I left the hotel on purpose to see you."

"I am at your service. Will you walk back to my home? We will be alone."

The individual hesitated a moment, and suggested that they go to the hotel, but that was a considerable distance away, and he accepted the invitation. Accordingly they turned about, and a few minutes later were seated in the sitting room of Bob's house. The latter turned up the gas, and, stepping to the foot of the stairs, called his mother in a moderate tone. There was no answer, proving that she was asleep. As I have said, she was not troubled by any fears that her boy would go wrong when not under her eye.

Hemitate Ox threw off his ulster, and at Bob's invitation continued his cigar, which he was about to throw into the blazing grate. He offered one to the youth, who smilingly declined, with the remark that he had not yet acquired the habit.

"Well," said his visitor, flinging one leg over the other and settling back in his rocking chair, "I wanted to see you on rather peculiar business. I don't claim to be a saint, but I'll be hanged if there ain't some things I won't do."

Bob wondered what he was aiming at, and observed:

"I am sure there are a good many things you wouldn't do."

"I don't know about that," said his guest, gently drawing at his cigar and looking into the glowing coals. "It would be better if there were more. I forgot to say to you this morning that I received my revolver which you sent round to my room."

"I ought to have sent it sooner, but it slipped my mind."

"It was all in good time. I suppose you have heard about my suit against the company."

"I have been told that you have brought suit for damages."

"So I did, but it is settled."

"I didn't know that."

"Yes, I made them a proposition this afternoon which I learned a little while ago would be accepted. They gave me a liberal sum, and have done what I demanded."

"You were quite fortunate," said Bob, who still failed to grasp all that his visitor was hinting at.

"I suppose you know the condition on which I agreed to accept a sum considerably less than I first asked?"

"I do not."

"It was that you should be discharged from the employ of the company."

Bob's heart gave a quick throb, for like a flash he saw and understood a great deal of recent events.

"Haven't you received notice?" asked Ox in surprise.

"Montague Worthley walked down to the station this evening as we came in, and handed me a letter which he said would interest me. I have no doubt it was a notice of my discharge, but he made a strange mistake and passed over an envelope which contained another letter altogether. He called here a while ago to get it back, but I concluded to hold fast to it for the present. It makes mighty interesting reading, and, if he persists in persecuting me without cause, I may be able to turn it to account as a means of defense."

Hemitate Ox did not try to hide his astonishment. He suddenly sat bolt upright in his chair, and, holding his cigar suspended between thumb and forefinger, stared at the youth, while a single muttered exclamation passed his lips. He was on the point of speaking, but repressed the words, and, settling back, rocked vigorously and puffed as though his cigar was on the point of expiring.

"Lovell," said he a minute later, "the meanest thing I ever did was to tack that condition to my proposal. It was suggested to me by another party, but it isn't necessary for me to mention his name."

"No, for you and I know there is only one person in the United States who would think of it."

Hemitate Ox laughed as though the remark pleased him, and hastened to say:

"I agree with you, I didn't think much of it at the time, and when a certain party asked as a personal favor that I would make the demand, I consented. After he was gone, I got to thinking it over, and the more I thought the meaner I felt. I finally made up my mind to send a second communication to the superintendent withdrawing the demand, and I had begun writing it, when what should be brought to my room but a message from Superintendent Worthley asking me to call at his house that evening."

It was Bob's turn to be surprised. He suspected what was coming, but it was almost too good to be true.

"Have you called?"

"I have," replied Ox with a smile, "and I found the old gentleman at home. He was sitting alone in his library and expecting me. It was plain to see there was something on his mind, and it didn't take him long to make it known. He said he was so troubled over your discharge that he couldn't rest. He had sent for me to talk the matter over, and to learn whether I couldn't be induced to withdraw the condition. He offered me five hundred dollars from his own pocket. If I would only sign it, he said he would open his eyes, when I shut him off at that point and told him I had already made up my mind to do so. It was on my tongue to let him know that the whole thing was the work of his son, but I was afraid of hurting his feelings, and I said nothing at that point, but I insisted that I should take the money he offered, but I replied that one infernally mean thing a day was all I could stand. Then he wheeled right round to his desk and wrote a note which he said would be delivered to you the first thing tomorrow morning. Seeing how pleased he was, I offered to place it in your hands this evening; and there it is."

Hemitate Ox, while speaking, had fished out an envelope from the pocket of his coat, and flung it toward Bob, who deftly caught it on the fly. The words were few but to the point:

ROBERT LOVELL, Esq.:
My Dear Sir: The communication from my office of today, notifying you of your discharge, is recalled. You will consider it unsent and continue your duties as heretofore. Very respectfully,
GAVARLY WORTHLEY, Secy.

"It was very kind in you, Mr. Ox, to do this," said Bob, in a tremulous voice; "I hardly expected it."

"Don't mention it," replied the caller, with an impatient wave of his hand; "I'm disgusted enough to kick myself to think I ever consented to such a thing."

"I am sure you will agree with me, Mr. Ox, that it pays to be just and charitable to all."

"It admits that it does in this case."

"I do in all others," Bob hastened to say, anxious to sow a few grains of good seed on the soil which cannot be said to have been very promising. "The career some people seem to disprove the old saying about honesty being the best policy, but there is a reward higher than anything the world can give."

Hemitate Ox had finished his cigar, but he sat for several minutes silent and thoughtful. Then he turned toward the youth who was sitting by, and said just his own door on his way to the round house, where Ajax was awaiting attention when he found himself face to face with Montague Worthley, who was walking rapidly toward him.

The countenance of the young man was flushed, and it was evident he was in anything but an amiable mood.

"I'll take that letter now," he said briskly, stopping short in front of Bob, who looked up in surprise.

"Hello, Flamm, is that you?" he called out in return.

A hot glow mounted to the face of young Worthley, who drew out the *right letter* from his pocket, and handed it to Bob with the remark:

"That is the one I meant to give you; we will trade."

"I don't know that I care about receiving yours," replied the fireman, declining to take the missive.

"It is from the superintendent, and is meant for you; you will find its contents interesting."

"I might have found them so last night, but another has reached me that is still more interesting."

"What do you mean?" asked Montague in angered amazement.

"Read for yourself."

As he spoke, Bob handed the communication of the night before to Montague, who read it with wrathful astonishment. There could be no mistaking the handwriting and the import of the contents. His countenance grew pale, and he uttered an imprecation.

"I see Ox about this. What can be the matter with him?"

"Nothing at all; your father saw him last night, and it was arranged between them. I don't think you are smart enough, Flamm, to upset their agreement."

"What do you mean by calling me 'Flamm'?"

"Have you never been addressed by that name?"

"Never, until you had the impudence to apply it to me."

"Who then is 'Flamm'?"

"Ah! then the letter which you handed me was not intended for you. Probably you stole it from the owner, and since you have no claim upon it, I will keep it until 'Flamm' presents himself."

It cost Montague Worthley a great effort to prevent his anger from breaking all bounds. He would have liked to throttle Bob Lovell and to take the missive from him, but he was too certain of the result of such an attempt.

He saw that despite his precaution the cool Bob was getting the better of him at every turn. He must have the letter at all hazards. His manner changed, and, with an insinuating smile, he said, in tones that were meant to be persuasive:

"Come, Bob, what's the use? It isn't fair to treat me that way. You never were so rough on me before. I'll be awfully obliged to you if you will let me have the letter."

This abrupt change of front did not deceive the young fireman, but he chose to suppress some of the rasping words that clamored for utterance.

"Why didn't you speak that way in the first place, Now, Tagore, if let you have the letter and say nothing about it, will you cry quits with me?"

"Of course I will; it's a bargain."

"And you'll stop sneaking down on me so hard?"

"Of course; we'll shake hands over it and let bygones be bygones. There are some things in the letter which look odd to one that doesn't understand them, but really, Bob, they don't mean anything."

The soft, effeminate hand of young Worthley was thrust impulsively into the hard palm of the fireman of the Ajax, and the pressure and salutation could not have been warmer.

When it was over, Bob Lovell drew from his pocket the envelope which had caused all this mental misery, and passed it to Montague.

The latter glanced at the superscription, to make sure another mistake had not been made, and then hastily shoved it into the inner pocket of his coat, beneath his ulster.

Words cannot express his relief when he felt that the compromising letter was once more in his possession. Hastily bidding Bob a curt good-by, he wheeled back and almost ran down the street.

"If I ever make another such blunder, I'll blow out my own brains, but if I do blunder like that again, it will be proof that I haven't any brains to blow out. As for Lovell, I guess it will be wise to let up for a while; I've been pushing him a little harder than is wise, but I hate him more than ever before, and I'll even up matters before long. He wants to be an engineer on our road, but he never shall. There won't be any trouble in fixing things so that he will stumble into a hole where he will be buried, and I'll do it!"

The eyes of the young man flamed with passion as he muttered this threat. There could be no doubt of his earnestness.

He entered his own home a few minutes afterward and joined his parents at breakfast. A casual question or two brought out the truth of what he suspected; Hemitate Ox had called the evening before, while he was away, and spent considerable time with his father in the library. There was no trouble to read the meaning of that interview.

When alone in his room for a few minutes before going to the office, Montague drew out the envelope which had spelled all sleep for the night previous.

"I'll wind up this part of the business," he muttered, withdrawing the folded sheet from within; "I'll burn this, and caution the boys to be more careful in writing me—great Scott!"

Montague Worthley's exclamation was due to an alarming discovery.

The sheet which he produced and unfolded

was blank. There was not the mark of a pen upon it. Bob Lovell had laughed him again.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BOB LOVELL AT THE THROTTLE.

BOB LOVELL had cause to feel grateful and pleased over the outcome of the recent events. Despite his distrust of Montague Worthley, he knew his own position as an employee of the Ironclad & Olafca Railroad Company was more secure than ever.

Matt Fields mounted the engine at the round house and brought the cars into the station, where they waited ten minutes for the baggage and express matter to be taken aboard, and for the passengers to assume their places for the journey westward.

"All aboard!" called Twomey, in response to the "Right here's!" from the brakemen; and then, with a wave of his hand, he added to the expectant engineer, "Go ahead!"

Ajax, in response to the slight jerk on the lever, gave a resounding puff, and the ponderous drivers began slowly to revolve. There was no sand coursing through the curved pipes upon the rails, and no slipping. Matt (although he did not always do it), had that art of the accomplished engineer who knows how to start his train without the disagreeable jerks and jolts that mark the work of some drivers. The engine moved so slowly that President Walbridge, who was on the train, looked out of the window and asked the superintendent at his side,

"Did you know we are moving?"

"No—is that so? So we are—but that is because we have a master of the lever."

The run to Ironclad, more than a hundred miles away, was fairly begun, and Ajax seemed to snuff with pleasure like the racer when he bounds across the plain. Only at rare intervals did the engineer look at his watch, for he was so accustomed to the movement of his engine, and so familiar with every point of the road, that he knew whether he was gaining time, falling behind or holding his own.

The trip was about half finished, when Matt asked Bob to take a turn at the throttle. Brief as had been his service on the road, he had already guided a train through every point of miles, so, without the least hesitation, he assumed the place vacated by Matt, and rested his hand on the lever.

"Hold her about where she is," said the engineer; "she is doing well enough."

Matt took a look at the furnace, tested the steam gauges, and, finding everything working right, seated himself on the left, where Bob was accustomed to sit, when not at work, and carefully noted how the youth handled the engine.

The Day Express never made a more admirable run than on that wintry morning, when she drew up at Ironclad after a second kind time. It was the same at every station, though the halts were few, and both the president and superintendent walked forward to the engine and complimented Matt Fields on his performance.

"Not that there is any special call for commendation," explained the superintendent, "for the reports show that it is the rule with you."

"The Ajax is the best engine on the road," replied the modest engineer, feeling as though he would like to pat the neck of the iron horse, if it had only possessed a neck to caress; "but then Bob here ran a part of the way."

"Under his eye," the blushing fireman hastened to add.

"He is rather young to be trusted with the running of a locomotive," said the president, "but you were really the director."

"He don't need much direction," said Matt; "and I wouldn't be afraid to trust him with an engine."

"His time will come," was the pleasant remark of the leading officer of the road, as he bade the employees good-by and walked away with the superintendent.

The result of the kind remarks that had been made to Bob Lovell was to make him magnanimous. He had resolved that morning to keep the compromising letter of Montague Worthley, not with any idea of using it wrongly, but to hold it as a sword of Damocles over the head of the unscrupulous youth.

But, although convinced of the treacherous disposition of his enemy, Bob reflected that he had as yet received no proof of it, and was not likely to receive it for an indefinite time to come. Besides, he believed the truth of what his mother had said to many men to him; he had but to do right and leave the rest to Heaven.

When, therefore, the Ajax drew up at the Olafca station that evening, and Montague Worthley was seen standing on the platform with his face paler than ever, Bob concluded not to keep him in suspense.

"Do you know you made a bad mistake this morning?" asked the youth the moment the fireman stepped off the engine.

"What was that?"

"You gave me the right envelope, but no letter was inside."

"You don't tell me!" laughed Bob, taking his coat from the box on his side of the cab, and hastily examining the pockets; "it must be here. Ah, I think that's it."

Montague's hands trembled as he perforce opened the folded piece of paper handed him.

"Yes—that's right," he said, after a glance at the handwriting, and without another word he turned on his heel and hurried off.

"You are welcome to it," muttered Bob, stepping back and holding himself ready to run

the engine to shelter, after passengers, baggage and express parcels were on the platform.

No young man could have a more delightful home than the young fireman of the Ajax. His mother was an educated lady of natural refinement, and the mutual love of herself and children could not have been more tender and perfect.

Small as were her means, she was able, with the help of her noble son, to give Meta, her daughter, the best educational advantages Olafca afforded.

Meta was as bright and popular as her brother, and though only three years younger than he, she held her place at the head of her class mates in the Olafca Young Ladies' Seminary.

Among the attendants of that admirable institution were Effie Worthley, the sister of Montague, who was about the same age as Meta. She was a beautiful girl, but possessed something of her brother's disposition, and, but for the fact that she found herself so often in need of the assistance of Meta, which was always cheerfully given, she would have treated her with such patronizing airs, that the proud Meta would have rebelled.

The next best pupil, and in some respects the equal of Meta, was Evelyn Walbridge, the youngest daughter of the president of the Ironclad & Olafca Railroad Company. She was a few months older than Meta, and was a brunette of striking loveliness, not only in face, feature, and form, but in manners and disposition.

She was inclined to be mischievous, but with it all was so kind hearted, so brimming with good nature, and so affectionate, that the teachers, while compelled to scold her, loved her all the more.

One of the most charming characteristics of Evelyn Walbridge was her unconsciousness of her superior social position and her affection for Meta Lovell. The friendship between these two girls was of a strikingly pure nature, and she never was a boarding-schooler at the stately mansion of Mr. Walbridge where young folks were present, that Meta was not the first to be invited.

It was out of Meta's power to give anything like the entertainments she attended, but that did not prevent Evelyn from being a frequent visitor at the home of her friend.

She frequently took tea with Meta, and sometimes spent the night with her. Mrs. Lovell was such a lovely woman that Evelyn often told her that she was as much an attraction to her as was the daughter, while Bob was the finest young fellow in town.

It was a time of teasing and making him blush, for she declared it made him look really handsome. He accepted her sweet persecution philosophically, but never allowed his feelings to tempt him to anything like presumption.

He treated her with the utmost circumspection and respect, not believing she could entertain any thought of a flirtation with him.

When he found, however, that Montague Worthley had turned his eyes in that direction, a strange pang went through Bob's heart. He wondered whether Evelyn could ever bring herself to listen to young Worthley's suit. If she did, he could no longer feel that respect which was a part of his being.

Overrunning with health and youthful spirits, their merry laughter filled the air with music, and their chatter was so exuberant, and ran so nearly parallel, that the wonder is how either understood a word said by the other.

"I've got a secret to tell you," said Evelyn in an awed voice, when Meta gave her a chance.

"What is it?" inquired the other, becoming suddenly sober.

"Papa told me that Prince is a mettled animal, and that I must take great care in driving him. Just as though there was a possibility of accident with me holding the reins!"

And the expression on the face of the president's daughter showed the horror she felt that such an idea could have entered the head of her parent. Meta assumed a similar expression, and it was a full fourth of a minute before Evelyn could recover her voice.

"Well, I mean to find out how much good there is in Prince. There isn't any chance to let him out while in town, for I don't want to be arrested for fast driving on my birthday, so what do you say to trying the turnpike?"

"It will be grand," replied Meta, her eyes fairly snapping with anticipation.

"I think it will be lovely. We will have a splendid race, two or three miles, as hard as a floor, broad enough to give us elbow room and a chance for the other steps to save themselves by getting out of our way, and Meta, we'll let Prince out."

"There's only one thing," said Meta, after they had gone a short distance: "a part of the turnpike runs along the railroad track, and, if we happen to meet a train—"

"We'll run a race with it," broke in Evelyn with a laugh.

"I would enjoy it, but—"

"It would be better than the chariot race at Barnum's. Oh now, Meta, why are you trying to frighten me? You know you will enjoy it as much as I do."

The turnpike to which Evelyn had made reference extended a little more than five miles westward from Olafca. Beyond that point it became so broken and rugged, that the majority of the company decided it wouldn't be right to attempt to run along it, and they decided that the people wouldn't pay it if it was charged.

The turnpike was older than the railroad, and a grave complaint was made that for a full half mile the two highways ran nearly parallel, and were of the same level, the turnpike crossing the railroad at an acute angle.

As an inevitable consequence of this state of things was that there had been numerous run-aways, and one or two serious accidents. There was much discussion over the remedy, but no action was likely to result for a long time to come.

Those who held the reins over the most spirited pacers generally managed so far as they could to keep the horses in the proper position of the road when the regular trains were due.

It was early in the afternoon, when Evelyn Walbridge reached the turnpike on the westerly side of the town, and started Prince on a brisk trot. She had decided to let the pony step off at a ready gait for about three miles, when they would turn about and put him through his best paces on his return.

CHAPTER XXV. AT THE TURNPIKE CROSSING.

IN the nature of things, a locomotive must run down and eventually wear out, like an ordinary horse. Every engine, therefore, has to take its turn in going out of service for repairs, which may occupy several days, weeks or even a month or more, according to the state of health of the iron charger.

Ajax had been "limping" for some time, and the men looking after the cylinders, the quick perception of her engineer had detected an irregularity in the play of the lead piston rod, and a thin fracture suddenly appeared in the tire of one of the drivers. Besides, some of the joints of the machinery were untrue, but it was the discovery of the break in the wheel which brought the decision to run the engine into the hospital for repairs.

The rule is that at such times the engineer, and generally the fireman, go with the locomotive, since the training of the former requires him to be familiar with the construction of the machine he controls. On reaching Ironclad, Matt Fields telegraphed the facts regarding Ajax, and the order came for Number 43 to take its place, while the other ran to Olafca and went into the shops.

Since Matt knew the full time table of the road, and had to keep out of the way of all trains, he had to feel his way eastward, turning upon the siding where he found himself, approaching the time of any train. This rendered the run tedious for a while, especially as he was obliged to wait at the Junction for half an hour.

At Jigtown, to the west of Dead Man's Hollow, he learned that the west bound freight would run on the siding a few miles out of town, so that the road clear for the afternoon accommodation, which was not far behind Ajax.

"This, as you will observe, gave a free run to Olafca, but the passenger train would be on the heels of Ajax, provided it was on time, and the latter did not step lively. Matt decided it would be perfectly safe to run into Olafca ahead of the accommodation, and, after a careful examination of his engine, he decided to do so.

"She would stand another week's run," he remarked to Bob, as he climbed into the cab, after inspecting every part of the machinery. "So we'll pull her wide open and let her whizz."

During the few months that had passed since Bob ran the Ajax part of the way to Ironclad, with the president and superintendent among the passengers, the fireman had become fully acquainted with the make and running of the locomotive, and Matt Fields was not far from right when he said Bob Lovell was as equal in skill of any engineer on the road.

And during that period, too, Bob had learned the truth of a distressing suspicion which had entered his mind for the first time on that same run. He kept his own secret, and never hinted it even to Matt Fields himself. The latter must have suspected that Bob had discovered it, but he, too, held his lips sealed, though the anxious expression on his honest countenance left no doubt of the anguish he suffered.

The result of this singular state of things was the determination on the part of Matt Fields that he never would hold the throttle of Ajax unless Bob Lovell was in the cab with him.

The latter expected Matt to invite him to take charge of Ajax after leaving Jigtown, but he did not. It may have been that in the brisk run before him he wished to stand where he could observe every throeb of the engine's heart, and hold himself ready to check its progress on the instant he detected any disordered pulsation.

With no train to draw, Ajax required comparatively little attention from the fireman. The coal which he shoveled into the furnace at Jigtown, while Matt was examining the engine, was sufficient to last to Olafca, and no more of Ajax was left to check its progress on the way to sit in place on the left of the cab, ring the bell as they approached the crossings, and watch for obstructions. A wild cat engine, as they are called, is sometimes peculiarly exposed to danger, since it runs out of schedule time, and, though its whereabouts may be known to the passengers, it is not known to the fireman, its appearance is unexpected by others.

You may have observed, too, that a locomotive runs more smoothly when drawing two or three cars than when going alone. The load acts in the nature of a balance wheel, and prevents that violent jolting and swaying shown by the engine when plunging forward with nothing beside its tender.

Matt's position resembled that of the physician who ventures on some experiments with his patient. He started Ajax with such a head of steam that at the end of two hundred yards she seemed to be going a mile a minute. Then he overtook the engine, to run a half mile from the momentum already acquired. Before she came to a rest the lever was twitched again, and away she bounded as if from a sharp knife prick.

It was easy for both engineer and fireman to detect her faulty gait. The steam hissed from one of the cylinders, and there was that which may be described as a grating or discord which was never present when Ajax was herself.

But there was nothing to be apprehended from this state of things, and all that Matt did was to hold the engine in check until he caught sight of the freight train on the siding several miles out of Olafca.

In reply to his inquiring signal, the brakeman of the freight waved his hand in a way to show that all was right, and with slightly diminished gait Ajax rattled over the switches to the smooth track beyond, where almost instantly she bounded off at high speed.

"Sinking" like four miles of straight track stretched away toward Olafca, and Matt determined that Ajax should come to a halt at the shops within the five succeeding minutes.

Bob Lovell was still sitting on the left, with the bell cord idly grasped in his motionless hand, which rested on his hip, while he gazed over the engine, watching so rapidly behind him. His eyes were fixed on nothing in particular, for the scene was too familiar to awaken special interest.

He gave a gentle pull at the bell as they approached the turnpike crossing, but was looking to the left instead of ahead when he heard Matt Fields exclaim:

"Great Heavens! they will be killed!"

Glancing at the engineer, he saw him yank over the revolving lever, as though he would tear it from its fastenings. It was a wonder that such a terrific strain on the cylinder heads did not blow them out, but as it was, the drivers, instead of coming to a standstill, began whirling the other way as fast as they had revolved a moment before. The sand from both pipes was poured down the tracks, while a steady stream of fire scintillated from the spinning tires of the huge wheels.

The suddenness and awfulness of the danger thus befalling Matt Fields, by the violent reversal of his engine produced scarcely a perceptible diminution of its speed, whereas, if he had held the wheels, as I have explained elsewhere, so that they revolved reluctantly, the restraint would have been at the greatest point.

And immediately after Matt did the worst thing he could have done, by emitting an ear-splitting screech from the whistle. He had no air brakes now at command, and Ajax could only depend on himself to come to a stop.

The instant Matt uttered his horrified exclamation, Bob Lovell turned his gaze to the front.

He saw a phaeton in which were seated two girls, one of whom was pulling with all her strength on the reins, while the panic-stricken horse was making for the crossing on a dead run.

Evelyn Walbridge and Meta Lovell were having their wish for a race with a locomotive. With no suspicion of their identity, Bob

leaped to the brake at one corner of the tender, and applied it with might and main, locked it fast with his foot, when he sprang back to his seat.

The pony and phaeton were some distance ahead, going at a tremendous pace along the highway, and they and the engine were rapidly converging toward the point where the road and railway crossed. The speed of Ajax of course was greater than that of the flying horse, but she was beginning to feel the curb of the brake, and it looked as if the meeting between her and the doomed horse could not be averted.

Clearly there was but one way of avoiding a frightful accident; that was for Matt instantly to throw the reversing rod forward and put on all steam again. This would give the engine such an advantage of speed that it would shoot by the crossing before the pony, even though on a dead run, could reach it.

Bob Lovell saw what Matt failed to see. Springing to the brake he kicked it loose, and then shouted to Matt:

"Go ahead! We can beat them!"

But alas! it seemed to the veteran that there was but one thing to do, and he did it by holding the reversing rod far back, while he kept so much steam in the cylinders that the driving wheels continued to whirl backward with lightning-like rapidity.

(To be continued.)

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E. T. Boyd, Concord, Tenn. A hand inkling press, type, a telescope, a learner's telegraph key and sander, and other articles, all valued at \$50, for a 1/2 horse power engine and boiler.

Evan Hubbard, 70 West Main St., Battle Creek, Mich. A magic lantern and 12 colored slides, a pair of ice skates, and a font of metal bodied rubber type, with holder, for a key and sander.

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J. H. Mowbray, Dover, Del. "Frank the Young Naturalist" and 3 other books by Castleman, two by Ballantyne, "The Crofton Boys," and 4 other books, all bound, for a set of wood engraving tools and type for manipulating printers' brass rules, or for a rule curving machine.

MAN'S GIFT DIVINE.

BY JOHN DRYDEN.

WHAT profits us that we from Heaven derive
A soul immortal, and with looks erect
Survey the stars, if, like the brutal kind,
We follow where our passions lead the way?

[This story commenced in No. 300.]

Ray Culver;

OR,

THROUGH DEEP WATERS.

By MATTHEW WHITE, Jr.,

Author of "Three Thirty Three," "Eric Dane,"
"Camp Blunder," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE BUTTONS TELLS HIS STORY.



JUST as Ray and Clifford reached the stable, they met the buttons boy face to face coming out of the coach house. His lips were puckered to a whistle, but they fell

apart to allow his mouth to expand with stupefaction as soon as he caught sight of Clifford. For might not the latter be a daylight ghost of himself?

"Do you remember me?" began Ray, putting out his hand. "Out at Dellwood, you know, about three weeks ago, when I asked you and the orchestra man to go away? I've tried hard to find you since then."

"Find me?" repeated the boy, with some difficulty transferring his attention from Clifford to Ray. "He—the Italian—didn't send you after me, did he? I left him, you know, the day after I saw you."

"No, I want you for yourself alone, to answer a few questions."

"I—I'd ask you in the house if I could take you anywhere but to my room up in the garret or in the kitchen. But here's a nice sunny place by the side of the barn, if you don't mind sitting on the grass."

"How much like Clifford's his voice is," thought Ray. "How on earth, though, does it come that he uses such good language?"

Then he replied aloud: "Certainly, we don't mind sitting on the grass. I hope you will mind as little answering a lot of questions I am going to put to you. Now, then, please tell me your name."

The three boys had flung themselves upon the soft turf on the prettiest side of the stable, and he of the buttons was about to reply when Clifford burst forth with the excited exclamation: "Why, Ray, he looks like you too!"

"Then you've noticed that we two look alike," interrupted the young stranger eagerly. "Indeed we have," rejoined Ray, "and that's what I want to talk to you about. Now, then, your name is—"

"Ned Brown."
"And you are how old?"
"Eleven."
"Do you remember your father and mother?"

"No, I was what they call a foundling."
Ray started, then said hurriedly: "Go on, please, and tell us all you know about yourself."

But the boy said nothing for an instant. With his handsome eyes wandering restlessly from one of the Culvers to the other, and his breath beginning to come in quick, uneven gasps, he seemed oblivious to all else except some thought of his own to which he was endeavoring to give definite shape. Then he suddenly broke out with:

"Was there a baby stolen in your family, and do you think I can be the one? I have wondered if it could be possible they would ever find me."

"No, it's all a muddle yet," replied Ray, "for I have never heard that any of our family was lost or stolen. That's what makes it so mysterious, you see—your looking so much like my brother, I mean. But please go on. Maybe we can straighten things out after a while. How did you come by the name Brown, and who told you that you were left a foundling?"

"Mamma Brown. She was the old lady who found me in front of her gate one morning in the arms of a man. He was dead, and I was pretty near gone too, but she took me in and kept me till I was nine years old."

"But wasn't there something on your clothes, or a scar on your arm or somewhere, to tell where you belonged?" asked Clifford, adding: "You know there always is in stories."
"No, there wasn't anything," replied Ned. "Not even an initial letter on my clothes or the man's. The doctors examined him, and said that he had dropped dead suddenly of heart disease, but nobody in the town had ever seen him before or knew where he came from."
"Where was this?" asked Ray, showing by his face the deep interest he took in the narrative.

"In Circleville, Ohio, and, as I told you, I lived there with Mamma Brown till I was nine. She wasn't rich at all, but she knew lots, and as soon as I got old enough, heard my lessons every day. But when she died, there wasn't anybody for me to go to, and maybe I'd have been in the poorhouse now if Dart and Dare's circus hadn't happened along just then."

"What made you join that?" here put in Clifford. "Had you been practicing up in tumbling?"

"No, I was just moping about the Hanford's kitchen—they lived next door, and Mr. Hanford was in the flour and feed business, and Mr. Dart came to him to buy oats—when Mr. Hanford came home to dinner and said the circus people wanted a boy the worst way to do some tumbling in place of one that had got hurt. He'd seen me walk on my hands, skin the cat, and that sort of thing, and told Mr. Dart he'd send me around to the tent. Of course I thought it lots of fun then, and hoped they'd take me, but after they did, and I had to keep learning new and harder tricks all the time, I got to hate the very smell of sawdust."

"Didn't they pay you a big salary?" asked Clifford, leaning forward with his chin propped on his brother's shoulder.

"Not they. Only five dollars a week, and I didn't even get that regularly. Then one night when the ringmaster cut at me with a whip for a slip I made, I packed up my things in a bundle, and cut sticks—ran away."

"And fell in with the orchestra man," finished Ray. "But how did you come to leave him and get settled here?"

"Oh, I was only with that fellow about a week. It was too much like being to suit me. Then the way he treated me, and how we had to eat—ugh! it makes me crawl to think of it! So one night I walked off from him—"

"When you were in Pittsburgh?" interposed Ray, with a sudden recollection of the Italian's representations concerning car fare.

"That's right," replied the boy. "I had only two dollars and thirty two cents in my pocket and no idea where I wanted to go or what I could get to do. But I kept walking straight ahead till daylight, and by and by I came to this house. One of the horses had got out of the stable. He was running all over the grass and lower beds, and the coachman and cook and all the other servants, with some of the family, were rushing up and down trying to catch him, but only scaring him all the more. Well, I vaulted over the fence and crept behind a bush where I saw the horse heading. Then I motioned for all the rest to keep away, and just waited. Pretty soon the horse quieted down and took to nibbling grass, and then, when he came close enough, I slipped up on one side and grabbed the halter. They all seemed to think it was a wonderful thing to do, but it wasn't—only not doing too much, you see. It was lucky for me, though, the folks here looked at it differently. They wanted to do something for me because of what they called my smartness. I told them the thing I needed most was work, and the young lady said I'd look fine in buttons, and wanted to know if I'd mind being one. Well, after knocking about in slums and garrets with an Italian street musician, hadn't any squeamish notions, so I was glad to take up with the offer. But it comes mighty hard to see them all having a good time laughing over jokes and all that, and remember that I've got to keep my face straight. There's the cook looking for me now. I suppose I've got to go."

"So must we," said Ray, rising, "or we won't get home before dark." Then, laying his hand on Ned's shoulder, he added earnestly: "Just be patient for a few days. I feel that there must be some tie between us, but you see there isn't any proof of it now. But I think I know of a way in which I can get some, and I hope it will be of the right sort. Good by."

The "buttons" shook hands soberly with both the brothers, and looked after them with wistful eyes as they walked down the driveway to the showy dog cart.

It was certainly a singular situation. Here were these boys who so *much* prove to be of the closest kin to one another, in which case the one would not remain in his mental position for an instant. Yet, pending the production of that proof, it was not to be expected that their attitude to one another would be more than that of kindly disposed acquaintances.

"How are you going to get that proof you spoke about, Ray?" asked Clifford, as they took their places in the cart.

"By writing to Uncle James as soon as we get back. Something may have happened when you and I were very young which has

never been told to us. He perhaps would know when I give him the whole story."

"I hope he will," responded the younger boy earnestly. "That Ned's the nicest fellow I ever met, if he is in buttons. I'd hate to have to give him up now."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

THE next few days were busy ones to our hero. It was necessary for him to have several long interviews with Judge Duncan, between whom and Mr. Fresham a meeting had also to be arranged.

The latter's condition, however, took such a serious turn, that for a day or two it seemed as if he must succumb to his injuries.

What with all these matters to occupy his attention, Ray did not find time to run on to New York to see about the removal of his effects from Mrs. Fanshawe's, and to pay for the loss of that M.S., until the end of the week. He had written to Charley Kip, notifying him of the great change in his fortunes, and the latter had replied, offering his congratulations and stating some facts which tended to throw a little light on the New York incident's mysterious behavior towards Ray and Bertha Douglas.

It seemed that a gaudily arrayed female, giving out that she was an English lady of rank, had applied to Mrs. Fanshawe for the two rooms (to be occupied, she stated, by herself and maid), which were already rented to the two Culvers and the young girl from Philadelphia.

Could she dispose of her apartments in this fashion, the landlady had reasoned, she would not only have fewer mouths to feed while receiving the same rent, but the fact that a personage of such consequence was included among her lodgers would lend a prestige to her house that would surely stand her in good stead.

Hence, the blunder of Bertha Douglas as her quest for ice water, and the almost simultaneous turning up of our hero, had been eagerly seized upon as a fortuitous opportunity of making place for the desired newcomer.

A great commotion was created in the household by the advent of this personage, but a still greater was set on foot the next day when it was ascertained that the lady of rank had decamped with several hundred dollars' worth of jewelry from various rooms, leaving in their place the two trunks, which proved to be filled with the same articles.

Ray could not help being amused by this story, told him by Charley, who had it from Mr. Coburn, whom he knew slightly. But he was still more entertained by Mrs. Fanshawe's manner toward himself, when he called there to see about his baggage.

Kip, it seemed, had taken special pains to inform the landlady that the young gentleman she had treated so rudely had fallen heir to princely wealth, owned no end of horses and carriages, and had serious thoughts of investing in a yacht. Thus Mrs. Fanshawe's efforts to apologize for her rudeness and endeavors to entertain him in the most luxurious manner possible, "Come over and spend Sunday with me, can't you, Charley?" said our hero, when he had finally and forever, as he hoped, shaken the dust of the Fanshawe mansion from his feet.

"I expect to find a letter from Uncle James there, and *perchance* you can be in at the close of the week," replied the young gentleman, as he been taken to his aunt's house in Camden, so you needn't fear you'd be coming to a hospital."

Kip gladly accepted the invitation, and the two boys found Clifford waiting for them with the dog cart at the station. Ray proposed a drive before going home, but Clifford hastened to inform them that a letter with a California postmark was waiting to be opened in the library.

"How long has it been there?" asked our hero eagerly.

"Only since this morning, but I could hardly keep my hands off it, I wanted to find out about Ned so bad."

As may be imagined, Bess was headed for the house with all possible speed, and five minutes later, Ray, with Clifford on one side and Charley on the other, each literally on the tip-toe of expectation, was standing in the room where that strange will of his father had first been read, breaking the seal of his uncle's letter.

It was short, but could not have been more to the point had it contained twenty pages. Here it is:

OAKLAND, CAL., Oct. 9, 1888.
DEAR NEPHEW RAYMOND: I was very glad to hear from you, but sorry to know that you had been in such difficulties since your poor father and mother's terrible death. I am not handy with the pen, you know, or I would have written you before. I thought of course you knew about that twin brother to Clifford. He was too young to be named when his nurse, while the family was crossing Lake Erie, walked out on the deck of the steamer one night in a fit of somnambulism and tossed him overboard. As nothing was learned of the fact till morning, it was of course useless to try and look for the child then, and he was given up for dead.

This boy, who you say so strongly resembles

Clifford, must be that infant, rescued by a miracle the instant he touched the water by some passing fisherman's boat. The sudden death of the man who had the child would account for the fact that Mrs. Brown failed to recognize the baby when at her gate with the one that had been lost on Lake Erie, over a hundred miles distant. Of course you are not bound to acknowledge the relationship, as it is now impossible to obtain any positive proof of it, but I should say that the boy you speak of is without doubt your own brother. All the evidence obtainable points to that fact.

Regarding the conversation that Charley overheard between your father and mother concerning the looks of a certain Philip, I can say that the one referred to was a cousin of your father's with whom he was very intimate when a boy, and who died soon after attaining his majority.

I am rejoiced to hear that after your strange experience, you are in a fair way to come into possession of your rights. Your aunt, cousins and myself will be delighted to have a visit from you this winter, all three of you.

Affectionately your uncle,
JAMES MCBURNEY.

"Can't we go down for Ned tonight?" was Clifford's first exclamation, after Ray had finished reading the foregoing. "It's moonlight. We can take the wagonette, and Charley can go along, and—just think—we'll have another brother to pass Sunday with us—yes, and all the days after that too."

Neither Ray nor Clifford had much appetite for dinner that night, and I fear me that the meal was hurried through with more rapidly than was consistent with strict etiquette, and a guest was present. But Charley seemed almost as excited over the coming reunion as the two Culvers themselves. It was a beautiful night, and as the well matched team trotted over the smooth roads, and Ray leaned back comfortably in a corner of the roomy carriage, he found it hard to realize that the man who had been through which he had lately been called on to pass were now all left behind. For Judge Duncan was to be appointed guardian of the boys by the court, with a regular allowance for each of them until they should come of age.

But now the carriage had reached the pretty cottage where Nimble Ned's tiny employments and almost before it came to a standstill Clifford was out on the ground and hurrying up the path to the piazza. Ray followed close behind, but Charley said he would remain in the wagonette, in order not to spring a crowd upon the household.

"I've rung the bell, Ray," called out Clifford. "Ted—let's call him Ted, can't we'll open the door himself, and—here he is now."

With the last words the impetuous youngster flung his arms about the form of the buttons boy with a glad cry of "You're my twin, and you're to come home with us this very night."

"Yes, old fellow, it's all right. We're brothers for good and all," and Ray held both the youngsters tight for an instant.

"Then, 'Why, Mr. Culver!'"

Such a tone of horror in which the words were uttered!

Our hero looked up with a start, and there, on the bottom step of the stairs, just buttoning her gloves by the light of the lamp affixed to the newest post, stood the girl he had met at Lake George and of whom Miss Vanderpool had faintly reminded him.

What must she think, beholding him fairly in the act of buttoning the "buttons"? But Ray was too quick witted to be long embarrassed.

Leaving Ted with Clifford, he hastened forward with outstretched hand, saying smilingly: "Oh, Miss Harriman, how glad I am to see you again! You are just in time to assist at the last chapter of a romance in real life—the fading of the long lost brother. Behold him now in olive green and shiny brass. Congratulate me!"

"Well, of all things!" and Miss Daisy Harriman clung rather tightly to the hand stretched out to her—perhaps to keep herself from sinking to the floor in stupefaction.

The next moment another young lady joined her, also drawing on her gloves, and soon thereafter a young gentleman of twenty appeared, who were duly presented to Ray as Miss and Mr. Von Mark, the daughter and son of the house.

To them our hero explained his extraordinary errand, and while they bewailed the loss of such a handsome "buttons," they united in congratulating Ted on his good fortune and begging him to come down and see them often with Ray.

For as Miss Harriman was to be a guest at the cottage for a month longer it goes without saying that our hero would be a frequent visitor there. And with this pleasant prospect to look forward to, we must leave him, for when untroubled waters open out before his characters, the story teller's task is done.

THE END.

THE MAGIC OF RED PAINT.

To paint the town red in our land proves on the part of the "painter" a lack of intellectual balance that is anything but praiseworthy. In certain regions of Asia, however, the red paint pot is held in such veneration by the natives as to make it sometimes very useful to foreigners who have big enterprises to carry through.

When telegraph posts were first set up in some remote parts of India, the gentle Hindoo was wont to cut the same down for firewood. A young engineer, who had studied the aboriginal character, painted the posts red, whereupon the natives worshiped the posts, and ceased to carry them away as burnt offerings.

THE GLOWING COALS.

The glowing coals are redly bright,
And deepen the soft shades of night
That in the sheltering corners hide
Their fitful forms, in haste to glide
From out the ruddy rays of light.
And as I look they fade from sight;
Vague forms of thought, forgotten quite,
Instead seem hovering beside
The glowing coals.
And dreams of boyish fear and fright,
In Fancy's colored hues bedight,
Stream down the drowsy mental tide;
Till fact and fancy both subside,
And in one dull, deep flame unite
The glowing coals.

[This story commenced in No. 307.]

My Friend & Smith.

By TALBOT BAINES REED,
Author of "Mr. Halgrove's Ward."

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW SMITH WENT HOME AND I WENT TO AN EVENING PARTY.

TWO days after the events recorded in the last chapter something happened which materially affected the course of my life in London.

Smith and I were just starting off to the office, after having finally made my submission to Mrs. Nash, and indeed her, with a promise "never to do it again," to withdraw her threat to turn us out, when the postman appeared coming round the corner.

It was a comparatively rare sight in Beadle Square, and Jack and I naturally felt our curiosity excited.

"May as well see if there's anything for me," said I, who had only once heard from my affectionate relative in six months.

Jack laughed. "I never saw such a fellow," said he, "for expecting things. It's just as likely there's a letter for me as for you."

At this moment the postman came up with a letter in his hand in apparent perplexity.

"Anything for me?" I said.

"Not unless your name's Smith," said the postman. "Smith of Beadle Square, that's the party—might as well send a letter to a straw in a haystack."

"My name's Smith," said Jack.

"It is?" said the postman, evidently relieved. "Then I suppose it's all right."

So saying, he placed the letter in Jack's hand and walked on. I distinctly quite proud to have found out a Smith at first shot.

Jack's color changed as he took the letter and looked at it.

He evidently recognized the cramped, ill formed hand in which it was addressed.

"It's from Packworth!" he exclaimed, as he eagerly tore open the envelope.

I don't think he intended the remark for me, for we had never once referred either to his home or his relations since the first time we were together in London.

In fact, I had almost come to forget that my friend Smith had a home anywhere but in Beadle Square.

He glanced rapidly over the short scrawl, and as he did so his face turned pale and a quick exclamation escaped him.

"Anything wrong, old man?" I asked.

"Yes," said he, looking up with a face full of trouble. "Here, you can see it," he added, putting the letter into my hand.

It was a very short letter and ran thus:

Dear Mister Johnny, Mary is very very ill. Could you come and see her? Do come—from Jane Shields.

"Mary is my sister," said Jack, nearly breaking down. "I must go, whether Barnacle lets me or no."

Our walk to the office that morning was quicker than usual, and more silent. Poor Jack was in no mood for conversation, and I fancied it would be kinder not to worry him.

mean to say he's got a sister. My eyes, what a caution! Fancy a female Bull's Eye, Wallop, eh?"

"So you may say," said Wallop the cad, laughing. "I wouldn't fancy her, if she's like Brother Johnny."

"And he's got to go to her, poor dear thing, because she's got a cold in her nose or something of the sort. Jolly excuse to get off work. I wish I'd got a sister to be ill too."

"Never mind," said Wallop; "if you'd been brought up in jail you be subject to colds. It's a rare draughty place is Newgate."

No one but myself had noticed Jack during this brief conversation. His face, already pale and troubled, grew livid as the dialogue proceeded, and finally he could restrain himself no longer.

Dashing from his desk, he flew at Wallop like a young wolf, and before that factious young gentleman knew where he was, he was lying at full length on the floor, with Jack standing over him, trembling with fury from head to foot.

It was the work of an instant, and before more mischief could be done Doubleday had interposed.

"Look here," said he, catching Jack by the arm and drawing him away from his adversary, "we aren't used to that here, I can tell you! Go to your desk! Do you hear? There's the governor coming up! A nice row you'll get us into with your temper! Come, you Wallop, up you get, I say—you beast! I'm jolly glad the young 'un walked into you. Serves you right! Look alive, or you'll be nabbed!"

The result of these exertions was that, when the door opened half a minute later the office was, to all appearance, as quiet as usual.



THE BANQUET AT DOUBLEDAY'S.

To our surprise, the comer was not Mr. Barnacle, who usually arrived first, but Mr. Merrett, who on other days hardly ever put in an appearance till an hour later.

What was the reason of this reversal of the order of things we could not say, and did not much care. Indeed, it was rather a relief to see the mild senior partner instead of the sharp eyed junior, who was, some of us thought, far too quick to perceive anything amiss.

Jack's face brightened as much as any one's at the circumstance. For a moment he forgot all his wrath, and thought only of his sister.

He followed Mr. Merrett quickly to the door of the partner's room and said, eagerly: "May I speak to you a moment, sir?"

"Yes, my man; come in," was the encouraging reply.

"Gone to tell tales, I suppose," said Crow, as the door closed on the two.

"No, he's not," said I, ready to take up the gauntlet for my friend; "and you'd better not say it again!"

"Oh, I say! Look here," said Doubleday, "don't you begin at that game, young shaver! We're used to it from your chum Bull's Eye, but I'm not going to let you start at it. Besides, Crow wouldn't like it. Get on with your work, do you hear?"

Jack reappeared with a grateful face, which showed at once that his application had been successful.

"Good by," said he, coming to my desk; "I'll be going to a line" and, without another word to any one, he was gone.

"He's a cool fish, that friend of yours!" said Doubleday, that afternoon, to me. "He seems to get on pretty much as he likes."

"He's awfully cut up about his sister," I said.

"No harm in that!" said Doubleday, condescendingly. "I thought he was quite right to walk into that cad Wallop myself. But he'll find it rather hot for him when he gets back, I fancy. When's he coming back?"

"In a day or two, I suppose," said I.

"And you'll be mighty disconsolate, I suppose," said Doubleday. "I'll be returns. What do you say to coming up to my lodgings to-night, eh, young 'un, to see me?"

I felt very grateful for this unlooked for honor, and said I would be delighted to come.

"All serene! I've asked one or two of the fellows up, so we'll have a jolly evening. By the way, when you go out, get me a couple of boxes of sardines, will you, and a dozen three-penny cigars?"

I executed these commissions, and in due time, business being ended, Doubleday and I and Crow, and the sardines and the cigars, started in a body for Cork Place, where, in a first floor front, the estimable Mr. Doubleday was wont to pitch his daily tent.

They were cozy quarters, and contrasted in a marked manner with Beadle Square. Doubleday knew how to make himself comfortable, evidently. There were one or two good prints on his walls, and a cheerful fire on the hearth, a sofa and an easy chair, and quite an array of pickle jars and jam pots in his cupboard. And, to my thinking, who had been used to the plain, unappetizing fare of Mrs. Nash, the spread on his table was simply sumptuous.

I felt quite shy at being introduced to such an entertainment, and inwardly wondered how long it would be before I, with my eight shillings a week, would be able to afford the like.

We were a little early, and Doubleday therefore pressed us into service to help him, as he called it, "get all snug and ship shape," which meant boiling some eggs, emptying the jam from pots into glass dishes, and cutting up a perfect stack of bread.

see it. I say, the Field Marshal's behind time. I'll give him two minutes, and then we'll start without him."

Just then there was a knock at the door, and two fellows entered. One was a tall, thin, cadaverous looking boy of about my own age, and the other—his exact contrast, a thick set, burly youth, with a merry twinkle in his eye and a chronic grin on his lips.

"Late again, Field Marshal," said Doubleday, clapping the cadaverous one on the back with a blow that nearly doubled him up. "Is this your chum? How are you, Patrick?"

The youth addressed as Patrick, but whose real name subsequently was announced as Daly, said he was "rightly," and that it was his fault the Field Marshal was late, as he had to shave.

This announcement caused great amusement, for Master Daly was innocent of a hair on his face as he was of being tattooed, and by the manner in which he joined in the laughter, he seemed to be quite aware of the fact.

We sat down to supper in great good spirits. I was perhaps the least cheerful, for all the others being friends, and I knowing only my two fellow clerks, I felt rather out of it. However, Doubleday, who seemed to have an eye for everybody, soon put me at my ease with myself and the rest.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

WHAT a meal it was! I hadn't tasted such a one since I came to London. Eggs and sardines, lobster and pork, meat, coffee and tea, toast, cake, bread and butter—it was positively bewildering.

And the laughing, and talking, and chaffing that went on, too.

Doubleday perfectly astonished me by his talents as a host. He never ceased talking, and yet everybody else talked, and he never ceased partaking, and took care that no one else should either. He seemed to know by the outside of a cup whether it was full or empty, and to be able to see through loaves and dish covers into everybody's plate.

It would be impossible to say what was not talked about during that wonderful meal. The private affairs of Hawk Street were freely canvassed, and the private affairs of every one of the company were discussed with the most charming frankness. I found myself giving an account of my uncle to the Field Marshal, which confidence he reciprocated by telling me that he was a private in the volunteers (that was why the fellows called him Field Marshal), and an accountant's clerk, that his income was fifty pounds a year, that he had saved seven pounds, that he was engaged to a most charming person named Felicia, whom at the present rate of his progress he hoped to marry in about twenty years.

Whipcord was discoursing on the points of every race horse in the calendar to the twins, who had evidently never seen a race horse; and Daly was telling stories which half choked Crow, and kept us all in fits of laughter. It was a new life to me, this, and no mistake.

"Now then, young Batchelor, walk into those sardines, do you hear?" said our host. "Any more coffee, twins? Pass up those tea cakes when you've helped yourself. Crow, I got them for twopenny apiece—not bad, eh? I say, I suppose you'll be up in the clerk's street, eh?—nam to the Field Marshal there. Yes, Harris of the Imports told me; he heard it from Morgan, who knows a fellow who knows old Merrett. Plenty more potted meat in the cupboard; get out some, Batchelor, that's a good fellow. The fact is—sugar enough in yours, Paddy?—the fact is, the old boy is going to put in a nephew—pass up your cup, Adam, Abel, what's your name, you with the paper in your button hole?—what was your mother about when she gave you such idiotic names, both of you? I'd like to give her a piece of my mind!—a nephew or something of the sort—that'll be the third kid in the last half year land in on us—don't you call that lobster a good one for eighteen pence, Paddy, my boy? Never mind, I'll let them know I'm not going to train up all their young asses for nothing—hullo! Batchelor, beg pardon, old man; I forgot you were one of them!"

This occasioned a laugh, which made me look very self-conscious; which Doubleday saw and tried to help me out.

"If they were all like you," he said, with a patronizing smile, "it wouldn't hurt; but that bull's eye chum of yours is a drop too much for an office like ours. Do you know, I believe it's a fact he's been in jail, or something of the sort—try a little vinegar with it, Field Marshal—capital thing to keep down the fat. Never saw such a temper, upon my word, did you, Crow? Why, he was nearly going to eat you up this very morning. And the best of it is, he thinks he's the only fellow in the office who does a stroke of work."

Never mind, he's safe at home for a bit; but, my eye! won't he be astonished to find Merrett, Barnacle & Co. can get on without him!"

I was beginning to feel very uncomfortable.

"Who's coming tonight?" said Crow, with whom, by the way, I had become speedily reconciled in our mutual occupation.

"Oh, the usual lot," said Doubleday, with the air of a man who gives "feeds" every day of his life. "The two Wickhams, and Joe Whipcord, and the Field Marshal, and an Irish fellow who is lodging with him. We ought to have a jolly evening."

In due time the guests arrived, Mr. Joseph Whipcord being the earliest. He was a freckled youth of most horsey get up, in clothes so tight that it seemed a marvel how he could ever sit down, and a straw in his mouth which appeared to grow there. Close on his two heels came the two Wickhams, whose chief attractiveness seemed to be that they were twins, and as like as two peas.

"Hullo! here you are," was Doubleday's greeting. "Which is which of you tonight, eh?"

"I'm Adam," replied one of the two, meekly.

"All serene, Adam. Stick this piece of paper in your button hole and then we'll know you from Abel. By the way, Whipcord, I suppose you never heard my last joke, did you?"

"Never heard your first yet," replied Whipcord, shifting his straw to the other corner of his mouth.

"Oh, yes you did," retorted Doubleday, who as usual always preferred the laugh when it was on his own side. "Don't you remember me telling Crow last time you came that you were a fellow who knew a thing or two? That was a joke, eh, twins?"

"Rather," said both the twins, warmly.

"But my last wasn't about Whipcord at all; it was about you two. I got muddled up among you somehow, and said, 'For the life of me I am an Abel to tell one of you from Adam!'"

"Well," said Whipcord.

"Well, what?" said Doubleday, savagely.

"The joke?"

"Why, that was the joke, you blockhead! But we can't expect a poor fellow like you to

