THE JUNGLE FUGITIVES

EDWARD S. ELLIS

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THE JUNGLE FUGITIVES

A Tale of Life and Adventure in India
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Many Stories of American Adventure, Enterprise and Daring

by

EDWARD S. ELLIS, A.M.

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THE JUNGLE FUGITIVES.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE SPRING OF 1857.

All through India, with its fanatical population five times as great as that of England, the rumblings of the coming uprising had been heard for months. The disaffection had been spreading and taking root. The emissaries of the arch-plotters had passed back and forth almost from end to end of the vast empire, with their messages of hatred and appeal. The people were assured that the “Inglese loge” were perfecting their insidious schemes for overthrowing their religion, and the faithful everywhere were called upon to crush the infidels in the dust. The evil seed fell upon the rankest of soil, and grew with a vigor and exuberance that threatened to strangle every other growth.

The plot, as agreed upon, was that a general uprising was to take place throughout India on the last day of May, 1857, but, as is often the case in such far-reaching schemes, the impatience of the mutineers precipitated the tremendous tragedy.

The first serious outbreak took place at Meerut on Sunday, May 10th, just three weeks previous to the time set for the general uprising. That town, with its population of about 40,000 at that time, lies thirty-two miles northeast from Delhi, which was to be the capital of the resurrected Mogul Empire. It was the precipitancy of this first revolt that prevented its fullest success. The intention was to kill every white man, woman and child in the place. Two regiments were clamorous for beginning the massacre, but the Eleventh Native Infantry held back so persistently that the others became enraged and fired a volley among them, killing a number. Thereupon the Eleventh announced themselves ready to take their part in the slaughter that was to free India from the execrated “Inglese loge.”

Seeing now for the first time the real peril, the colonel of the Eleventh made an impassioned appeal to the regiment to stand by its colors and to take no part in the useless revolt. While he was speaking, a volley riddled his body, and he tumbled lifeless from his saddle. The Eleventh, however, covered the flight of the other officers, but helped to release a thousand prisoners, suffering punishment for various offenses, and then the hell fire burst forth.

The bungalows of the officers, the mess houses of the troops, and all the buildings between the native lines and Meerut were fired, and the whole became a roaring conflagration, whose glare at night was visible for miles.

When an appeal was made to the Emperor of Delhi by the troopers, he inquired their errand. The lacklustre eyes flashed with a light that had not been seen in them for years, the bowed form acquired new energy, and he gave orders to admit the troopers.

Their message was enough to fan into life the slumbering fires of ambition in the breast of a dying person.

He yielded to the dazzling dream. A throne of silver, laid away for years, was brought into the “hall of special audience,” and the tottering form was helped to the seat, into which he sank and looked around upon his frenzied followers. Mohammed Suraj-oo-deen Shah Gezee was now the Great Mogul of India. A royal salute of twenty-one guns was fired by two troops of artillery from Meerut in front of the palace, and the wild multitudes again strained their throats. To the thunder of artillery, the strains of martial music and the shouting of the people, the gates of the palace were flung open, and Prince Mirza Mogul, with his brother, Prince Abu Beker, at the head of the royal bodyguard, rode forth, the king following in an open chariot, surrounded by his bodyguard.

With impressive slowness this strange procession made its way through the principal street, the populace becoming as frantic as so many ghost dancers. Finally a halt was made at the Juma Musjeed, the largest mosque in India, where the banner of the Prophet was unfurled and the Mogul Empire proclaimed.

CHAPTER II.

ON AN AFTERNOON.

Almost due east from Delhi Dr. Hugh Marlowe, a venerable American physician, had lived for more than twenty years. Since the death of his wife, six years previous to the Mutiny, he had dwelt alone with his only daughter, Mary, and their single servant, Mustad, a devout Mussulman. A portion of the time mentioned had been passed without the society of his beloved child, who spent several years in New England (where the physician himself was born and had received his education) at one of the fashionable schools.

Shortly after her graduation, Miss Marlowe met Jack Everson, fresh from Yale, and the acquaintance ripened into mutual love, though the filial affection of the young woman was too profound to permit her to form an engagement with the young man until the consent of her father was obtained, and he would not give that consent until he had met and conversed with the young gentleman face to face and taken his measure, as may be said.

“If he doesn’t esteem you enough to make a little journey like the one from America to this country he isn’t worth thinking about.”

“But he *will* make the journey,” said the blushing daughter, patting the bronzed cheek of the parent whom she idolized as much as he idolized her.

“Don’t be to sure of that, my young lady; romantic young girls like you have altogether too much faith in the other sex.”

“But he *has* started,” she added with a sly smile.

“He has, eh? He will change his mind before he reaches here. How far has he got?”

“He was due in England many weeks ago.”

“Well, well! How soon will he arrive *here*?”

“I think he is due now.”

“Very probably, but his fancy will give out before he reaches this out-of-the-way place.”

“I think not, papa.”

“Of course not, of course not; I just told you that that is the way with all foolish girls like you.”

The old gentleman had assumed a stern earnestness, and he added: “I tell you he will never show himself here! I know what I’m talking about.”

“But he *is* here, papa; let me introduce you to Jack Everson, a physician like yourself.”

All this time the smiling young man was standing directly behind the old doctor, who was lazily reclining in a hammock on the shaded lawn, smoking a cheroot, while his daughter sat on a camp stool, with one hand resting on the edge of the hammock, so as to permit her gently to sway it back and forth. As she spoke the tall, muscular American walked forward and extended his hand.

“Doctor, I am glad to make your acquaintance,” he said, in his cheery way. The astonished physician came to an upright position like the clicking of the blade of a jackknife, and meeting the salutation, exclaimed:

“Well, I’ll be hanged! I never knew a girl so full of nonsense and tricks as Mary. You are welcome, doctor, to my house; let me have a look at you!”

Jack Everson laughingly stepped hack a couple of paces and posed for inspection. The elder deliberately drew his spectacle case from his pocket, adjusted the glasses and coolly scrutinized the young man from head to foot.

“You’ll do,” he quietly remarked, removing his glasses and returning them to the morocco case; “now, if you’ll be good enough to seat yourself, we’ll talk over matters until dinner time. When did you arrive?”

Jack seated himself on the remaining camp stool, a few paces from the happy young lady, accepted a cheroot from his host, and the conversation became general. Like most Americans, when at home or travelling, Jack Everson kept his eyes and ears open. He heard at Calcutta, his starting point, at Benares, Allahabad, Cawnpore and other places, the whisperings of the uprising that was soon to come, and his alarm increased as he penetrated the country.

“Worse than all,” he said gravely, speaking of his trip, “one of my bearers spoke English well, and quite an intimacy sprang up between us. Since his companions could not utter a word in our language, we conversed freely without being understood. He was reticent at first concerning the impending danger and professed to know nothing of it, but this forenoon be gave me to understand, in words that could not be mistaken, that the whole country would soon be aflame with insurrection.”

“Did he offer any advice?” asked Dr. Marlowe, less impressed with the news than was his visitor or his daughter.

“He did; he said that the escape of myself and of your family could be secured only by leaving this place at the earliest moment possible.”

“But whither can we go? We are hundreds of miles from the seacoast and should have to journey for weeks through a country swarming with enemies.”

“I asked him that question, and his answer was that we should make for Nepaul.”

“That is the province to the east of us. It is a mountainous country, a long way off, and hard to reach. Why should he advise us to go thither?”

“I questioned him, but he seemed to fear that his companions would grow suspicious over our conversation and he said nothing more. I thought he would add something definite when we came to separate, and, to loosen his tongue, I gave him an extra fee, but he added never a word, and, unless I am mistaken, regretted what he had already said.”

“It seems to me,” observed the daughter, “that the man knew it is impossible for us to get to the seacoast, and believed that by going further into the interior we should reach the people who are not affected by the insurrection. Wide as it may be, there must be many points that will not feel it.”

“That is the true reason,” said her parent, “but, confound it! I have lived in this spot for twenty years; the little town of Akwar lies near, and there is hardly a person in it who has not been my patient. I am known even in Meerut and Delhi, and I can hardly believe the mutineers, for such they seem to be, will harm me or my friends.”

“You once told me,” replied Mary, “that when an appeal was made to the religion of this people they knew no such thing as fear or mercy.”

“And I told you the truth,” said her father gravely. “But since we have weapons and plenty of ammunition, and know how to handle the firearms we shall not be led like lambs to the slaughter.”

“That is true enough,” said Jack, “but it will be of little avail, when our enemies are numbered by the hundred and perhaps the thousand.”

“I take it, then, that you favor an abandonment of our home?”

“I do, and with the least possible delay.”

“And you, my daughter, are you of the same mind?”

“I am,” was the emphatic response.

“Then my decision is that we shall start for the interior and stay there until it is safe to show ourselves again among these people, provided it ever shall be safe.”

“When shall you start?”

The parent looked at the sky.

“It is two or three hours to nightfall. We will set out early to-morrow morning before the sun is high in the sky.”

“But will we not be more liable to discovery?” asked Jack.

“Not if we use care. I am familiar with the country for miles in every direction. We shall have to travel for the first two or three days through a thick jungle, and it is too dangerous work to undertake in the night-time. This, you know, is the land of the cobra and the tiger, not to mention a few other animals and reptiles equally unpleasant in their nature. Last night,” continued the doctor, “I saw a glare in the sky off to the westward on the opposite side of the river in the direction of Meerut. I wonder what it meant?”

“By Jove!” exclaimed Jack, “that explains something that the palanquin bearer said to me about there being so many Inglese where there are none to-day. I could not catch his meaning, though he mentioned Meerut. But he gave me to understand that it was not quite time yet for the uprising, which would come in a few weeks.”

“Those things are apt to be precipitated. I have no doubt that the mutineers burned the city last night. If so, the main body will hurry to Delhi, which, being the ancient capital of the Mogul Empire, will become the new one. Some of the rebels may take it into their heads to come in this direction. What is the matter, Dr. Everson?”

CHAPTER III.
YANKEE MARKSMANSHIP.

As Jack Everson was seated he faced the broad, sluggish Ganges, with the low, green banks beyond. He was looking over the water, in the rays of the declining sun, when he saw something that caused him to rise hastily from his seat and peer earnestly across the river toward the opposite shore. Observing his action, the doctor asked his question. Both he and his daughter, rising to their feet, gazed in the same direction. It was easy to see what had attracted the attention of their guest. A party of horsemen, fully twenty, if not more, in number, had approached the river and were now halted on the other side, looking across in the direction of Dr. Marlowe's home, as if debating the question of making it a visit.

"Let me get my glass," said Mary, starting toward the house, hardly a hundred feet distant.

"Allow me to bring it," interrupted Jack. "It is on one of the chairs on the veranda, and I want my rifle."

Taking the glass from him on his return, the young woman levelled it at the group of horsemen on the other side.

"I cannot make out who they are," she said, passing the glass to her father.

It took the parent but a few seconds to answer the question. One sweeping glance told him.

"They are Ghoojurs," he remarked, with as much calmness as he could assume.

"And who are Ghoojurs?" asked Jack Everson, less excited than his friends.

"They belong to the nomadic tribes which originally occupied India, and are among the worst wretches in the world. They are brigands and robbers, who are to be dreaded at all times. Now, if the revolt has broken out, they will be as merciless as tigers."

"It looks as if they intended to make us a visit, doctor?"

"Alas! there can be no earthly doubt of it."

"Let us hurry into the jungle," said Mary, her face paling with fear. "We have not a minute to waste."

"The advice is good, but before acting on it I should like to make an experiment."

During this brief interval Jack Everson had carefully examined his rifle to assure himself that it was in good condition.

"Heavens, man!" exclaimed Dr. Marlowe, "you are not going to try a shot at them?"

"That is my intention."

"They are a mile distant!"

“One of my medals was won for hitting a target at exactly that distance,” replied Jack, continuing his preparations.

“It is impossible that you should succeed.”

“But not impossible that I should try, so please don’t bother the man at the wheel.”

“They have ridden into the water,” added the young woman, still nervous and excited.

“Which will serve to shorten the distance somewhat.”

“Why not wait until they are halfway across; or, better still, not wait at all?” inquired the doctor.

Jack Everson made no reply, but, lying down on his back, he slightly separated his raised knees, and, by crossing his ankles, made a rest for the barrel of his rifle. The left arm was crooked under his head, so as to serve as a pillow or support, leaving the hand to steady the stock of his gun, while the right inclosed the trigger guard.

The horsemen, instead of riding side by side, were strung along in a line, with the leader several paces in advance and mounted on a rather large horse of a coal-black color. Directly behind him came one upon a bay, while a little further back rode another on a white steed. There could be no question that they were on their way to kill without mercy.

The situation was intensely trying to father and daughter. The whole party of Ghoojurs had entered the Ganges and were steadily approaching. The water was so shallow that it could be seen as it splashed about the bodies of the riders, who were talking and laughing, as if in anticipation of the enjoyment awaiting them. They preserved their single file, like so many American Indians in crossing a stream, and their last thought must have been of any possible danger that could threaten them from the three on the further bank.

The situation was becoming unbearable when the rifle cracked with a noise no louder than a Chinese cracker, and a faint puff of smoke curled upward from the muzzle of the weapon. At the same moment the Ghoojur at the front, on his black horse, flung up his arms and tumbled sideways into the water, which splashed over his animal’s head. Frightened, the horse reared, pawed the air, and, whirling about, galloped back to the bank, sending the water flying in showers from his hoofs.

“Score me a bull’s-eye!” called Jack Everson, who in his pleasure over his success, could not wait for the result.

“But see!” cried Mary, “you have only infuriated them. Oh! father, how can we save ourselves?”

CHAPTER IV.

FLIGHT.

The success of the first shot gave Jack Everson self-confidence and he took less time in aiming the second, which was as unerring as the first. Another Ghoojur plunged off his horse and gave but a single struggle when he sank from sight in the shallow water.

“Another bull’s-eye!” called Jack, proceeding to reload his piece. “I hope, doctor, you are keeping a correct score; I must have credit for all I do.”

“Now for my distinguished friend on the milk-white steed,” said Jack, proceeding to adjust his telescopic sight to that individual. “If they will send over the three horses it will give us one apiece.”

But the Ghoojurs had had enough of this fearful business. They saw that some unaccountable fatality was at work and it was madness for them to remain. With never a suspicion of the truth they wheeled their animals about and sent them galloping for the bank which they had left a short time before full of hope and anticipation.

“I’m sorry for that,” reflected Jack Everson, “for it mixes things and I can’t pick out my man, but here goes.”

In one sense, his opportunity was better than before; for, while he could not select his particular target, he had but to aim at the bunch to make sure of hitting somebody, which is precisely what he did.

The Ghoojur whom he punctured did not fall, for the reason that two of his friends reached out and prevented him. It was a piece of supererogation on their part, for when the party emerged from the Ganges upon dry land that fellow was of no further account.

Jack now showed more haste than before in reloading his weapon, fearing that the party would get beyond his reach before he could fire for the fourth time. Much to his regret, they did so, for though he made the shot, it was necessarily so hurried that it inflicted no injury, and the whole party galloped out of sight over the slight swell without showing any further concern for their companions left behind. Jack now rose to his feet with the question:

“What is my record, doctor?”

“Three bull’s-eyes; your score is perfect.”

“Hardly, for the last was a miss; however, three out of a possible four is pretty fair when the circumstances are considered. I suspect that that particular party is not likely to give us further trouble.”

“No, they will not forget the lesson.”

“If we can induce our enemies to make their approach by the same ford and when the sun is shining this will become truly amusing.”

"But the Ghoojurs will not repeat that mistake. This affair has served another purpose," added the physician, "we must not delay our departure."

"Do you advise our going while it is night?"

"I advised the contrary a little while ago, but I confess I am afraid to stay in the house, even for a few hours. However, we will take our dinner there, gather a few belongings and then hurry off. We shall find some spot where it will be safe to pass the night, and where we are not likely to be molested, because no one will know where to find us."

All glanced in the direction of the other shore, and seeing nothing to cause misgiving moved to the house, a low, roomy structure, though of moderate proportions, with a broad veranda extending along two sides. It was time for the evening meal, and there was some surprise felt that Mustad, the servant, had not summoned them before.

This surprise turned to astonishment and alarm when it was discovered that Mustad was not in the house. No preparation had been made for dinner, and though his name was called several times in a loud voice, there was no response.

"He has left us," said the doctor.

"What does it mean?" asked Mary.

"It can have but one meaning: by some legerdemain, such as our own Indians show in telegraphing news from one mountain top to another, word has reached Mustad of what has taken place, and he has been called upon to join the faithful, and has been only too glad to do it."

"I should think he would have attempted to do us harm before going."

"He is too great a coward."

"But his fanaticism will make him reckless."

"When he gets among his friends then he will be among the worst."

"But, father, he was always meek and gentle and respectful."

"Those are the kind who become directly the opposite."

"Do you think he would harm us?"

"I have no doubt of it," was the reply of the doctor. "I know the breed; I have twice been the means of saving his life through my medicines, and Mary nursed him for three weeks when he was suffering from a fever."

"Yon may be doing him an injustice," ventured Jack Everson, to whom the judgment of his friend seemed bitter.

"I wish I could think so, but, Mary, if you can provide us with something in the way of food, Mr. Everson and I will get the things together that we are to take with us."

Dr. Marlowe wisely decided not to burden themselves with unnecessary luggage. Jack took from his trunk a few needed articles and stowed them into a travelling bag whose supporting strap could be flung over one shoulder. Though a physician himself, admitted to practice, he had brought none of his instruments with him, for the good reason that he saw no sense in doing so. Into the somewhat larger bag of the elder doctor were placed his most delicate instruments and several medical preparations, mostly the results of his experiments. They were too precious to be lost if there was any way of preserving them. Mary packed her articles in a small travelling bag, the strap of which she, too, flung over her shoulder, though Jack asked to be allowed to relieve her.

It was after the hurried meal had been eaten by lamplight that the three completed their preparations for departure. That to which they paid the most attention was their means of defense. Jack Everson had brought a plentiful supply of cartridges for his superb breechloader; and the belt was already secured around his body. Dr. Marlowe never allowed his supply of ammunition to run low, so that the two were well supplied in that respect.

Jack was pleased to find that the revolver belonging to Mary Marlowe was of the same calibre as his own, so that the cartridges could be used indiscriminately.

“I remember,” he said to her, when the parent was just beyond hearing, “that you were quite skillful with your weapon.”

“Not specially so, but what skill I gained is due to your tuition.”

“Not so much to that as to the aptness of the pupil.”

“Your remark is more gallant than true, but I hope I shall not be called upon to use this weapon as you used yours awhile ago.”

“Such is my prayer, but if the necessity arises do not hesitate.”

“Be assured I shall not,” she replied, with a flash of her fine eyes and a compression of her lips.

CHAPTER V.

COMPANIONS IN FLIGHT.

Everything needed having been gathered, the lamps were extinguished, and with the physician in the lead, the three passed out of the front door to the veranda. The doctor decided to leave the door unfastened, since it was useless to secure it.

Suddenly, when the doctor was about to give the word to move, he saw a shadowy figure in the direction of the river.

“Sh!” he whispered; “it looks as if we had waited too long; some one is approaching. Be ready to use your gun or to retreat into the house if necessary to fight it out there.”

“It is a white man,” said the daughter in an undertone; “he may be a patient.”

It was clear by this time that the stranger was not a native, for he was dressed in civilized costume and his gait was that of a European. He did not perceive the silent figures until within a few paces of the veranda, when he paused abruptly, as if startled.

“Good evening,” he said in English. “Is this Dr. Marlowe?”

“It is; who are you?”

“My name is Anderson; I was looking for you.”

“In what way can I serve you?”

“You have heard the news, I suppose,” said the man, keeping his position, and looking up to the three, who were now all on the edge of the veranda; “the native soldiers at Meerut mutinied yesterday, killed most of their officers, plundered the city, slaying every white person they could find, after which most of them hurried to Delhi.”

“You bring dreadful tidings; I had heard nothing definite, but suspected all that you have told me. Are you alone and why do you come to me?”

“I fled with my wife and two other families, Turner and Wharton, from the outskirts of Meerut as soon as there seemed a chance for us. We made our way to the river, found a boat and paddled to this place, for we had no sail and there was scarcely any wind.”

“Where are your friends?”

“I left them by the edge of the river in the boat, promising to rejoin them in a few minutes.”

“Have you no companions, but those you named?”

“None; my wife and I buried two children last Summer; Mr. Turner has none, and Mr. Wharton and his young wife were but recently married.”

“You have not told me why you come to me?”

“Chiefly to warn you of your peril and to beseech you to fly before it is too late.”

“I thank you very much for your solicitude; it was kind on the part of you and your friends, but it strikes me that one place is about as safe as another.”

“We are so far from the large cities and the coast that it is useless to attempt to reach any of them. Our first aim was to get as far from Meerut as possible; then as we found ourselves approaching your home, it seemed to us there was a chance for our lives by pushing to the northward, into the wilder and less settled country, where the flames of the insurrection may not reach.”

“Your sentiments are our own; you have been wonderfully fortunate in getting this far; my friends and I have seen enough to warn us to lose no time, and we were on the point of starting when I saw you.”

“May I ask what course you intend to take?”

“I have lived here for twenty years, so that I am acquainted with the section. My intention was to follow a slightly travelled road, which, in fact, is little more than a bridle path, until several miles beyond Akwar, when we should come back to the main highway and keep to that for fifty or perhaps a hundred miles. By that time, we should be safe, if such a thing as safety is possible.”

“Your plan is a good one, but is not mine better?”

“What is that?”

“I, too, am familiar with this part of the country; a stream empties into the Ganges just eastward of your house, hardly a half mile distant; it must have its source somewhere among the foothills of the Himalayas. At any rate, it is navigable for all of a hundred miles. It seems to me that when paddling up that stream at night, between the wooded banks, there will be less chance of being discovered by enemies than when travelling overland, as you contemplate.”

“I am favorably impressed with your plan; do I understand you to invite us to join your party?”

“You are more than welcome; our boat will accommodate us all without crowding, but I regret to say we have but a single gun among us. That is mine, which I left with my friends against my return.”

“We are well supplied in that respect; we accept your invitation with many thanks.”

As the doctor spoke he stepped down from the veranda, followed by the others, and Mr. Anderson led the way across the lawn to the river, where his friends were awaiting his coming with many misgivings. A general introduction followed. A common danger makes friends of strangers, and in a few minutes all were as well acquainted as if they had known one another for days and weeks. Anderson and Turner were men in middle life, while Wharton was of about the same age as Jack Everson. They had lived for several years on the outskirts of Meerut, but it was young Wharton who discovered the impending peril, and it was due to him that the three families escaped the fate of hundreds of others on that woful night. The young wife and Mary Marlowe became intimate friends at once, while, as has been said, there was a hearty, genuine comradeship immediately established among all.

The boat was larger than Dr. Marlowe and his companions suspected. It was more than twenty feet in length, with a cabin at the stern, a place for a mast, though there was neither mast nor sail on board. Anderson had spoken of paddling to this point, when, had he spoken correctly, he would have said that no paddles were used, but that the craft was propelled by means of poles.

CHAPTER VI.
ON THE GANGES.

While all the members of the party were cheered by hope, none forgot that a dreadful peril impended. Enough time had passed since the revolt at Meerut for the news to spread even beyond the little town of Akwar, which was within a fourth of a mile of the home of Dr. Marlowe. He was aware that some of the most fanatical Mussulmans in all India lived there. The action of the servant Mustad, who owed his life to the father and child, was proof of what might be expected from these miscreants when swept off their feet by the delirium that was spreading with the frightful swiftness of a prairie fire.

Accordingly no time was lost. There was a hurried scrambling on board, the water fortunately being deep enough near shore to allow all to step upon the boat dry shod. The faint moon revealed the smooth surface of the Ganges for nearly a hundred yards from land, but the further shore was veiled in darkness. It was at this juncture that Miss Marlowe made an annoying discovery.

“Oh, papa, I have forgotten my pistol!”

“Wait and I’ll soon get it,” she added, starting to leap the short distance from the gunwale to land, but Jack Everson caught her arm.

“You must not think of it; tell me where you left the weapon and I’ll bring it.”

“I laid it on the table in the dining-room and in the hurry forgot it when we left.”

Jack turned to his friends.

“Don’t wait here,” he said, aware of the nervousness of the whole party. “Push down stream, and I’ll quickly overtake you.”

Without waiting for further explanation, he leaped the slight space and started up the lawn on a loping trot. For convenience he left his rifle behind, but made sure that his revolver was in his hip pocket. He did not apprehend that he would need the weapon in the short time he expected to be absent, but if anything went awry it would be more useful than the rifle.

In that moment of profound stillness following the disappearance of the young man among the trees grouped about the lawn, the motionless people on the boat felt a thrill of terror at the unmistakable sound of oars from some point on the river not distant.

“Let us land and take refuge in your house,” suggested young Wharton; “we cannot make a decent fight in this boat.”

“We shall have a better chance than in the house,” was the reply of the physician; “the bank of the river is shaded by trees a little further down; we must lose no time in getting there, and avoid the least noise.”

There were two long poles belonging to the boat, one of which was grasped by

Wharton, while Anderson swayed the other, the remainder watching their movements, which could not have been more skillful. Pressing the end against the bank, and afterwards against the clayey bottom, the craft speedily swung several rods from shore.

While the two men were thus employed, the others peered off in the gloom and listened for a repetition of the sounds that had frightened them a few minutes before. They were not heard again, nor could the straining vision detect anything of the dreaded object, which could not be far away. Not a person on board doubted that a number of their enemies were near and searching for them. Dr. Marlowe would have taken comfort from this fact had the circumstances been different; for the men who were hunting for him would go to his house, since it was there they must gain their first knowledge of his flight; but, as he viewed it, it was impossible that they should be wholly ignorant of the boat and its occupants, which must have made most of the distance before night closed in.

It followed, therefore, that if they were looking for the doctor and his family they were also looking for the boat and the fugitives it contained. The low-lying shore, with no trees fringing the bank, was the worst place for him and his friends, and he was in a fever of eagerness to reach the protecting shadows along shore. The nerves of all were keyed to the tensest point, when they caught the dim outlines of the overhanging growth, with the leafage as exuberant as it always is in a subtropical region at that season of the year. The men toiled with vigor and care, while the others glanced from the gloom of the river to the deeper gloom of the bank, which seemed to recede as they labored toward it. With a relief that cannot be imagined the bulky craft glided into the bank of deeper gloom, which so wrapped it about that it was invisible from any point more than a dozen yards distant.

It is inconceivable how a narrower escape could have come about, for the two men had hardly ceased poling, allowing the boat to move forward with the momentum already gained, when their enemies were discovered. Mary Marlowe’s arm was interlocked with that of her father, when she nervously clutched it and whispered:

“Yonder is their boat!”

All saw the terrifying sight at the same moment. Almost opposite, and barely fifty yards out on the river, could be traced a moving shadow, the outlines of which showed a craft similarly shaped to their own, except that it was somewhat smaller and sat lower in the water. The men were too dimly seen for their number to be counted or their motions observed, but, as in the former instance, the sounds indicated that they were using paddles.

Since it was certain that the natives were searching for the fugitives in the boat under the shadows of the bank every one of the latter wondered that the pursuers remained out in the stream, when there was need of unimpeded vision. They half expected their enemies to turn to the left and come directly for them. But nothing of the kind took place. The craft headed down the river, the sound of the paddles so slight that only the closely listening ear could hear them, until it melted in the gloom and vanished from sight.

It was a vast relief for the moment, but little comfort could our friends take from the fact. Their enemies were not likely to go far, when they would suspect that something of the nature described had occurred, and they would return and grope along shore for their victims. So certain was Dr. Marlowe of this turn that he believed the wisest course was for the entire party to abandon the boat, and, as may be said, “take to the woods.” They had the whole night before them, and, with his intimate knowledge of the roads, paths and trails of the country and jungles, he was confident of guiding them beyond danger and to some place where, when morning dawned, there would be little to fear in the way of discovery.

This course would have been taken except for the absence of Jack Everson. There was no way of apprising him of the change of plan, and, with his ignorance of the topography of their surroundings, he would be certain to go astray, and for any one in his situation, to go astray meant death.

CHAPTER VII.
AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

Meanwhile, Mr. Jack Everson found matters exceedingly interesting.

When he informed his friends that he would rejoin them in the course of a few minutes the possibility of anything interfering with his promise did not occur to him. That danger threatened every member of the little company may be set down as self-evident, but what could happen to disturb him in the brief interval spent in running up the slope, dashing into the house and back again to the river’s side?

Such were his thoughts as he entered the shadows and hurriedly approached the front veranda. Although he had reached this spot within the preceding twenty-four hours the evening meal and the preparations for flight had given him sufficient knowledge of the interior to remove all difficulty in going straight to the table in the dining-room and taking the forgotten revolver therefrom.

The first tingle of misgiving came to the young man when he was close to the porch and about to step upon it. He remembered that it was himself who had extinguished the lamp on the table as the three were about to pass into the hall and out of doors, but lo! a light was shining from that very room. What could it mean?

“That’s deuced queer,” he thought, coming to an abrupt halt; “I screwed down that lamp and blew into the chimney in the orthodox fashion, so it couldn’t have been that I unconsciously left the wick burning.”

At this juncture he made another significant discovery. The front door which he had seen Dr. Marlowe close was partly open. The inference was inevitable: some one was in the house. In the brief time that had passed one or more persons had entered and were busy at that moment in the interior. Perhaps they had been watching among the shadows on the outside for the occupants to leave the way open for them to pass within.

Prudence dictated that Jack Everson should not linger another moment. Indeed, he ought to have counted himself fortunate that he had made his discovery in time to save himself from running into a trap. He should return to his friends with the alarming news and help them in getting away with the utmost haste possible. But Jack did nothing of the sort.

The chief cause of his lingering was his desire to obtain the revolver belonging to Miss Marlowe. Recalling the paucity of firearms among the people on the boat he felt that a single weapon could be ill spared. But above and beyond this cold truth was a vague, shuddering suspicion, amounting to a belief, that the young woman would soon need that very weapon; that, without it she would become another of the unspeakable victims of the fiends who made the Sepoy Mutiny one of the most hideous blots that darken the pages of history. He compressed his lips and swore that the revolver should be recovered, if the thing were possible, failing in which he would compel her to take his own.

The first thing was to learn whether there was more than one person in the house and what business had brought them there. His own return was not expected, so that that advantage was in his favor. He stepped lightly upon the veranda and, like a burglar in his stocking feet, passed across the porch and pushed back the door far enough to admit him. This required but a few inches, and the hinges gave out not the slightest creak. The entrance to the dining-room was closed, so that all was darkness, but he plainly saw the yellow thread along the edges of the door, caused by the lamp in the room beyond.

Once within the hall he listened intently, but could not detect the slightest sound within the building. He had already drawn his revolver, and held it ready for instant use. Knowing the value of seconds, he began moving along the hall toward the door, which was only a few paces distant, and had passed half the space when a muttered execration escaped him, for his foot struck some object that was kicked the remaining length of the hall with a clatter that he verily believed must have been heard by his friends on the boat.

No use now for precaution. Determined to have the other weapon, but not unmindful of the peril involved, he strode the few remaining steps and hastily shoved open the door of the dining-room. If a foe was there with the revolver he was quite likely to hold it levelled at the intruder, because of which Jack, when he burst into the room, held his own weapon pointed, so as to prevent any enemy from “getting the drop” on him.

For one moment the young man believed it was all a mistake and that, despite the precaution taken upon leaving the house, he had not extinguished the lamp, whose wick had recovered its vigor, but the suspicion was hardly formed when he knew there was no foundation for it. In the first place no lamp ever acts that way, and, the front door having been closed, could not open of itself. More convincing than all was the fact that Mary Marlowe’s revolver, which had brought him back, was missing.

Diagonally across the dining-room from where Jack Everson stood was the door leading to the rear of the house. This was open for three or four inches, and while searching the apartment with all the keenness of his powerful vision, he distinctly saw it move. The distance was no more than an inch, but he was not mistaken, and knew it had been drawn that much nearer shut. Since no air was stirring the conclusion was inevitable that some one was on the other side who was aware of the entrance of the American.

The position of the lamp on the table threw the crevice caused by the slight opening of the door in shadow, and all was blank darkness beyond. But, looking in that direction, Jack caught the gleam of a pair of eyes, peering from the gloom like the orbs of a jungle tiger gathering himself for a spring. Nothing could be seen but the glow of the eyes, that seemed to have something of the phosphorescence of the cat species, but he could not mistake the meaning of what he saw.

Jack had partly lowered his revolver, after the first glance around the room, but it now came to a level again with the suddenness of lightning and was pointed straight at the gleaming eyes, as he spoke in a low, deadly tone:

“Come forth or I’ll send a bullet through your infernal brain!”

Never was man more fairly caught. In the language of the West, Jack Everson had the drop on him, and none could be more alive to the fact than the fellow who was thus taken at disadvantage. It was merited punishment for his foolhardiness in inviting his own discomfiture. At first the chances of the two were equal, but the white man was more alive to the situation.

The Asiatic showed his appreciation of the situation by stepping forward into the lamplight.

Incredible as it may seem, he not only held a pistol in his right hand, but it was half raised and pointed at Jack Everson.

CHAPTER VIII.
MUSTAD.

The East Indian who stood before Jack Everson, thoroughly cowed and submissive, was unusually tall, dark, and thin to emaciation. He wore a turban, a light linen jacket which encompassed his chest to below the waist, with a sash or girdle, loose flapping trousers and sandals. In the girdle at his waist was a long, formidable knife or yataghan, which he would have been glad to bury in the heart of the man who had thus brought him to his knees.

When Jack Everson demanded to know his identity the fellow replied in a low voice that was not lacking in a certain musical quality:

“Mustad!”

The young man half expected the answer.

“What business brings you here?”

“He is my master; I work for him. I have been to see my aged mother, who is very ill. I have just returned to serve my master.”

“That is not true! You went away to bring some of your people to kill the doctor and his family.”

“Sahib does Mustad great wrong,” replied that individual in a grieved voice. “I love my master and my mistress. I am not ungrateful. I would give my life sooner than harm a hair of their heads. Where have they gone?”

It was the last question that removed all lingering doubt of the native’s treachery. He had returned to bring about their overthrow, but knew not where to look for them. When he could ascertain whither they had fled he and his brother miscreants would be at their heels.

“Suppose I should tell you that they had gone to Meerut or Delhi?”

“Allah be praised!” exclaimed the other devoutly; “for then they will be safe.”

“Is there no trouble in Meerut or Delhi?”

“What trouble can there be!” asked Mustad, with well-feigned simplicity. “It is in those cities that the missionaries and many of the Inglese live. They have lived there many years. What harm could befall them?”

By this time Jack Everson had lost all doubt of the perfidy of the man. He could not fail to know what had taken place within the preceding twenty-four hours in the cities named, and he lacked his usual cunning when he tried to deceive his questioner.

The young man saw that it was a waste of time to question Mustad. No reliance could be placed on anything he said.

“You will wait here, then, until Dr. Marlowe comes back?”

Mustad vigorously nodded his head and replied:

“I shall wait, and my eyes will be filled with tears until I see the good man and his child again. When will they come to their home?”

“Well, the best thing you can do is to wait here until you see them again.”

As Jack made this remark he took a quick step forward and picked up the revolver. He did not pause to examine it, but was sure that none of the chambers had been discharged. Slipping the weapon into his coat pocket, and still grasping his own, he said:

“I think I shall go out on the veranda and await the return of the doctor.”

As he made this remark he committed a mistake for which there was no excuse. Instead of backing out of the room he turned about and started through the open door into the hall. The walking cane against which he had once struck his foot still lay where he had kicked it, and he tripped over it a second time. The mishap, slight as it was, saved his life. As he stumbled in the gloom something whizzed like the rush of a cobra’s head past his temple, nipping his hat and striking the opposite wall with force enough to kill two or three men. It was the yataghan of Mustad, who had drawn and hurled it with inconceivable quickness and with an aim so unerring that it would have brained the unsuspecting American but for his fortunate stumble.

The furious Jack whirled around with the purpose of sending a bullet through the brain of the wretch, but something like a shadow flitted through the lamplight while Jack was in the act of turning and, before he could secure any aim, the scoundrel had vanished. Determined not to be balked the young man let fly, and then, bounding across the room, snapped back the door, meaning to repeat the shot at the first glimpse of Mustad. But the latter was familiar with all the turnings of the house, while Jack knew nothing of that portion of the building. He could neither see nor hear anything, and did not deem it prudent to use the lamp to help in the search, though it was hard to retire from the field and leave the miscreant unpunished.

To do so, however, was the wiser course, and again he moved into the hall. This time he backed thither, though, since Mustad had no weapon, it was impossible that the attempt upon the young man’s life should be repeated. The outer door was opened, and once more he stood on the veranda.

Before venturing across the lawn in the direction of the river he spent a minute or two in peering into the surrounding gloom and listening. He may have been mistaken, but he fancied he heard more than one person moving stealthily about in the house. Once he was sure he caught the sound of whispered words, so that the astounding fact was established that during the few minutes occupied in talking with Mustad he had a friend within instant call.

“All of which goes to prove that these people are cowards at heart,” was the sage conclusion of Jack Everson. “They will throw away their lives for the sake of Islamism, and they will fight like wildcats if a man turns his back upon them; but when he stands face to face they are whipped curs.”

Since there was no doubt that Mustad and his companions would be on the alert to note the course taken by Everson, so as to learn what had become of his friends, the young man saw the need of misleading them. He took care not to return to the river over his own trail. Instead of doing so he moved to the right, as if on his way to the nearby town of Akwar. When satisfied he was beyond range of the keen vision of those in the house of Dr. Marlowe he made an abrupt change, which led him toward the Ganges, forgetting, when he did so, that there might be natives in the vicinity who were not in the building at all.

CHAPTER IX.

SCOUTING.

Had Mr. Jack Everson spent a few years in Hindoostan he would not have made the blunders that we are obliged to record concerning his movements after parting from his friends on the boat. He had acquitted himself pluckily while in the house of the physician, but his escape from death at the hands of Mustad and his companion was providential and, under similar circumstances, was not likely to be repeated once in a thousand times.

Moreover, with his knowledge, already gained, of Asiatic cunning, he ought to have reflected that if two of their dusky enemies were within the house there were likely to be others in the immediate neighborhood. It looked as if Mustad had entered the dwelling expecting to find the physician there. He was prepared with an excuse for his abrupt departure and an explanation that would satisfy his indulgent master and mistress. Keeping his companion in the background the wretch could then complete his plans for turning the party over to the fury of their brother murderers, who probably were calmly waiting on the outside for the signal.

Nothing of all this, we repeat, entered the head of Jack until he had made the change in the course he was following and had passed down the slope to the river bank. His effort to mislead his enemies necessarily took him some distance above the point where he had left the boat, and he now set out to find his way to it. It was while he was engaged in doing so that he became aware that he was followed.

“Well, I’ll be hanged!” he muttered, coming to an abrupt stop; “it seems to me that these infernal imps are everywhere.”

He had not seen any one, but a rustling, grating noise in the shadow of the nearest tree told him where the immediate danger lay. Believing that an unexpected course was best he wheeled and ran at full speed toward the tree, which contained a large number of dense, wide-spreading branches.

The result was surprising. Instead of one native, two leaped out from cover and ran away at full speed. They had been stealing after him, on the watch for a chance to bring him down by a blow in the back, when the tables were turned in this unexpected manner. Jack, therefore, had no hesitation in firing at the one on his right, and immediately after at his companion, whose superior speed had placed him considerably in advance. As a consequence, he missed the latter, while the first emitted a screech, leaped high in air and sprawled forward on his face as dead as Julius Caesar.

The fact that his pursuers were two in number led the young man to believe they were Mustad and his companion, whom he had heard in the house. A few minutes later he made another halt. He was able, despite the gloom, to identify the spot where he had left the boat, but it was not in sight.

"I told them not to wait for me, and they acted on my suggestion. They can't be far off, and I hope have run into no trouble."

The occurrences of the last quarter of an hour gave Jack a vivid idea of the increasing peril. The natives from the nearby town were hunting for the physician, his daughter and himself, all of whom had not left the house a minute too soon and now, while he paused on the shore of the river and listened, he too caught the sound that had filled his friends with dread. There were no noises from the jungles to the eastward, though at times the outcries are terrifying, and the shouts and shrieks of the mutineers and their victims at Meerut and Delhi were too far away to reach his ears, but he heard now and then the faint sound of paddles out on the stream.

"Anderson spoke of using paddles," reflected Jack, "but it was a misnomer, for they have none, and they would not have pushed so far out from shore when they knew I expected to return so soon. All that proves that a party of devils have also a boat and are hunting for the one in which our new friends are groping for safety."

This threatened to make a new complication, but the plain course for Jack was to keep along the shore of the river and press his search for the craft, which he was certain was not far off.

His experience had taught him the need of unceasing vigilance, and as he advanced, he scrutinized the ground in front and on every hand, like a scout stealing into a hostile camp. Within less time than he counted upon he saw the boat lying close to shore, where his friends were awaiting him. As soon as he recognized the craft he announced himself in a guarded undertone, to guard against any mistake, and the next moment clambered aboard, where, it need not be said, he was warmly welcomed.

After they had exchanged greetings the doctor asked:

"Did I not hear the report of your pistol a little while ago?"

"Inasmuch as I discharged it very probably you did."

Thereupon Jack told of what he had seen and done since leaving the boat to recover the pistol of Miss Marlowe. It was a story of deep interest to all, and his account of his meeting with the faithless Mustad deeply stirred his master.

"Despite my denunciation of the fellow I confess I had a lingering suspicion that I might have been mistaken; but all doubt now is removed. There is no native in all India to be more dreaded than he."

"I have a faint hope that it was he with whom I made my fourth bull's-eye," remarked Jack.

"Hardly likely. Probably there were two others skulking on the outside and waiting for a chance at us."

"But they had all the chance they could have asked at *me*."

"It may have been the doctor and his daughter whom they were the most eager to secure," suggested Mr. Turner.

"That is my belief," added Anderson.

"And mine, too," joined the doctor himself. "It seems to be a trait of our perverse human nature to hate with the deepest intensity those who have done us the greatest kindness."

This remark meant more to Jack Everson than to any one else, for he believed that it was the daughter who was the special object of the natives. That reminded him of the weapon he had secured.

"Here," he said, "take it before I forget to return it."

"You risked a good deal for my sake," she said gratefully, accepting the weapon, "and I cannot thank you sufficiently—— Well, I declare!"

She was in the act of placing the pistol in the pocket of her dress when she made the discovery that her weapon was already there. Jack Everson had taken Mustad's own property from him.

CHAPTER X.
ALONG SHORE.

The curious incident served to lift for a brief time the oppression that rested upon all. The remarkable part of it was how Miss Marlowe could believe she had left her revolver in her home when it was in the pocket of her dress, where, it would seem, she ought to have felt it while walking across the lawn to the boat, even if she had forgotten to examine that most natural receptacle for it when she first missed the weapon.

“It is the most stupid thing I ever did,” she declared. “I meant to keep it in my hand while coming from the house, and, awaking to the fact that it was not there, did not stop to examine my pocket. It is too bad.”

“We have gained an additional means of defense,” observed Mr. Turner, “and that may be decisive before we are through with this business.”

Now that all were together again each was impatient to be on the move. Wharton and Turner began using the poles with the skill shown some time before, and once more the unwieldy craft swung slowly down the Ganges, with all on board alert for the first sign of their enemies. The women were advised to remain in the small cabin, where they would be safe against stealthy shots.

As the boat crept under the shadows along shore the spirits of all improved, for it seemed that with every rod placed behind, them the danger was diminished, and by and by would vanish altogether.

“That, however, cannot be,” said the doctor to Jack Everson, as they sat a little apart from the rest, near the bow of the craft. “In truth, I see but one possible escape for this party.”

“What is that?”

“I have already referred to it. It will take us weeks to reach Calcutta on the east or Bombay on the west, and between us and each of these points the hell fire will rage for months to come. To go south is equally suicidal, since it would take us into the heart of the insurrection. I repeat that there is but one thing to be done: that is to push northward, as I said, until we reach a people too far removed to be affected by this deviltry.”

“To find a simple people where our knowledge of medicine will cause us to be looked upon as superior beings. I have discovered a remedy for the bite of a cobra which will stand one in good stead, should a native be bitten. They believe, you know, as does the rest of the world, that the bite of this serpent is certain death. But I have discovered a remedy, the necessary drugs of which I carry in this case,” touching the leather case strapped to his back.

“Beyond all doubt. You have tested this remedy of yours?”

“I have, twice.”

“Upon man or brute?”
“Upon both.”

CHAPTER XI.

A COLLISION.

Although the two physicians were deeply interested in the question of toxicology they could not forget their situation and its perils. The craft had nearly completed its half mile to the mouth of the tributary which it was intended to ascend, when the polemen, pausing for a moment’s rest, whispered that they heard the sound of paddles again.

“*There they are*!”

It was Jack Everson who uttered the exclamation, loud enough for all to hear. He pointed down stream as he spoke, and every one perceived the dreaded boat returning.

Although nearer at hand than before, it seemed to be following the course of the river, and there was hope that it would again pass without discovering the shrinking ones so near land.

When first observed the other boat was fifty yards out and not quite so far down stream. Moving against the current its progress was slower than before, but its advance was plainly perceptible. The craft of the white people had lost the momentum imparted by the poling, and was now controlled only by the current, which was so sluggish close to the land that the motion was hardly noticeable.

The hopes of our friends steadily rose until the other boat was almost directly abreast. It would seem that if the occupants intended attacking they would have veered inward before this, but there could be no assurance so long as they remained visible.

Every one started when the gaunt, sloping figure suddenly became upright at the prow of the boat and stood motionless. He had ceased using the pole that he had been plying with so much vigor. At the same moment the noise of the paddles ceased, proving that the men controlling them had also stopped work. What could it mean?

No one of the white people stirred or whispered. Could they have done so they would have checked the beating of their hearts through fear of being betrayed. Surely something had awakened the suspicion of the natives.

Suddenly some one spoke on board the craft. The voice was audible, but the doctor, who was a master of Hindoostanee, could not catch what was said. At the same instant a splash was heard, and the lank form bent over, as he pressed the long pole against the bottom of the river and resumed his slow walking toward the stern. The noise of paddles, too, was heard again. The craft had resumed its progress, and for an instant every one believed it was about to pass by. Then Jack Everson said:

“By heaven! they’re coming for us!”

All saw that the boat was swinging around so as to head toward them.

“Into the cabin, quick!” commanded the doctor, and the women quickly scrambled out of sight, while the men lay down, so as to screen their bodies as much as possible.

“It won’t do to let them come too near,” added the physician. “Try to make every shot tell.”

As he spoke he took the best aim he could and fired. Jack Everson was but a moment behind him, and Anderson discharged his gun almost simultaneously.

CHAPTER XII.
A WHITE MAN’S VICTORY.

It was clear that the reception was a stunning surprise to the Asiatics in the other boat. In times of confusion and terror strong men often sit dazed and meekly submit to massacre when sturdy resistance would leave a far different tale to tell. Such was the case at Meerut, at Delhi, at Cawnpore, at Lucknow and scores of places where the human fiends revelled in massacre and crime.

But here, where evidently the same submissiveness was expected, the miscreants were fired upon before they had discharged a single shot themselves. Not only that, but the Caucasians kept the thing up. This was contrary to all rule and precedent.

If, however, the white men did not wait to be slain, neither did the dusky barbarians sit still and allow themselves to be shot down. They ceased paddling and appealed to their guns, whose bullets began whistling about the heads of the defenders in the other boat.

Who of our friends did it will never be known, but one of them perforated the gaunt scoundrel who, with his form bent over, was pushing the pole while he stalked the length of the boat, returning again to the prow to repeat the performance. The fellow emitted a screech like a wounded tiger and leaped several feet in air, coming down on the gunwale, over which he toppled into the water and was seen no more. It was the spirited defiance of the white men that told. Screening themselves as best they could they continued firing, Jack Everson occasionally adding a shot from his revolver by way of variety. The conformation of the other boat and its crowded condition prevented the natives from sheltering themselves as did those who were using them as targets. In short, the wretches were getting the worst of the business, and it did not take them long to learn the fact. Left without control, their boat began drifting with the current, which being stronger than along shore gradually carried it down stream and out of sight. So long, however, as it was visible its occupants continued firing, while the white people did still better, for they sent several shots after their enemies when they could see nothing and fired wholly by guess.

There could be no question that the promptness of Dr. Marlowe and the vigor of the resistance threw their foes into a sort of panic from which they did not recover until beyond range. They had been taught a lesson that they were sure to remember for a long time; though, when our friends came to think the matter over, after finding no one of them had been hurt, they could not escape the belief that the consequences were certain to be of the most serious nature to themselves, and in this conclusion, sad to say, they were not mistaken.

CHAPTER XIII.
UNDER THE BANK.

A few minutes later an open space appeared in front of the boat. It was the month of the tributary flowing into the Ganges from the left or north, and was more than a hundred yards across. Since it was necessary to stem the current in order to take advantage of this refuge, the doctor contemplated it with misgiving, for the work of poling it up stream promised to be laborious. He had not forgotten his original plan of abandoning the boat and striking across the country on foot, taking advantage of the less-frequented roads and paths that were well known to him. He was relieved, however, to find the flow so languid that it was easy to make headway against it.

"I have never followed this stream far," he remarked, "and, therefore, have less knowledge of it than the rest of the country, but my impression is that it cannot serve us long."

"It will be time enough to leave the boat and take to the woods when we can go no further," said Jack Everson; "but we cannot get away from the main stream too soon."

This was self-evident. It was not likely that the natives after their decisive repulse would abandon their purpose of massacring the party, but they would be more guarded in what they did and probably secure reinforcements, an easy thing to do when the sanguinary wretches everywhere were thirsting for victims.

Jack had seized one of the poles, and he and young Wharton plied them with so much sturdiness that the heavy craft made better progress than at any time since it was used as a vehicle of safety. The course of the tributary was winding, and our friends had not gone far when they were shut out from the sight of any persons passing up and down the main river, even if close to the northern bank.

Would the natives suspect the course taken by the whites? That was the all-important question that must soon be answered. After searching up and down the Ganges without success, it was likely they would penetrate the stratagem and follow them, in which event the fugitives would be in a critical situation, since the straightness of the stream and the wooded shores would place them at much greater disadvantage than if they remained upon the Ganges.

When the boat had ascended the tributary for perhaps an eighth of a mile it was deemed safe to lessen the work of poling. Careful listening failed to detect any sound of pursuit, and there was ground for hoping that their enemies neither knew nor suspected what had been done.

Several facts had become apparent. The densely wooded shores offered excellent concealment. By running the boat beneath the dense branches and among the heavy vegetation the keenest-eyed Asiatics might pass up or down stream almost within arm’s length without suspecting its presence. But the tributary had perceptibly narrowed and its current was swifter than at the mouth. All this pointed to the truth of what Dr. Marlowe suspected—the stream could not serve them much further.

The night was now so far advanced that the women took the advice of their friends and withdrew to the cabin for slumber. Their quarters were cramped, but they made themselves fairly comfortable. The night was cooler than the day, but only sufficiently so to be pleasant. It was not deemed probable that anything would be seen of their enemies before the morrow, and perhaps not even then.

Dr. Marlowe insisted upon taking his turn in poling, but since there were four vigorous men without him, they would not consent. When two had toiled for an hour or more, they gave way to the other couple, and the progress thus continued without interruption, while the time slowly dragged along. The resting spells gave each the opportunity for sleep, thus husbanding their vigor for the morrow. Finding that there was nothing to which he could turn his hand, the physician reclined at the bow and soon joined the others in dreamland.

It was probably one o’clock when Jack Everson, who had been sleeping for nearly an hour, was awakened by a gentle shaking of his shoulder. Opening his eyes and looking up he saw Wharton bending over him.

“All right,” remarked the American; “I’m ready for my turn,” and he rose, yawning, to his feet.

“I think we had better rest until morning.”

“Why?”

“The current has become so rapid that it is hard to make progress; this stream can’t be of much further use to us.”

It needed but a glance around in the gloom to see that it was as his friend had declared. The boat was so close to the left-hand shore that it was held motionless by Anderson at the bow, who gripped an overhanging branch, with one hand. The water rippled around the front of the craft, and when Jack dipped the end of one of the poles into the current it swept downward at a rate that astonished him.

“I esteem your advice good,” he said, “but it will not do to leave the boat in sight.”

With the help of the limbs and the use of the poles it was easy to force the craft under the bank, where it was screened from observation. Then it was secured in place against drifting and all work for the time was over.

Wharton and Jack Everson were the only persons awake. The women had been sleeping for several hours, while Anderson and Turner had long since joined the venerable doctor in the realms of unconsciousness. The two young men sat down where they could speak in low tones without being overheard.

“It won’t do for all of us to sleep at the same time,” remarked Jack; “the scoundrels may be creeping up stream after us.”

“That is hardly possible; I am sure that for the present we are as safe as if in the heart of London.”

“I cannot believe as you do; since I have just enjoyed an hour’s sleep I will act as sentinel until daybreak. I can easily keep awake for the few hours that remain.”

“As you think best, though I am sure it is an unnecessary precaution.”

“We must not forget that there are perils from the jungle as well as from the river. There is no saying what wild beast may pay us a visit.”

Inasmuch as Jack could not be dissuaded from his purpose, and Wharton began to suspect his friend was half right, the question was decided. Wharton stretched out on the deck, falling asleep almost immediately, and Jack thus found himself the only one with his senses at command and with the safety of the others dependent upon him.

He took his place near the cabin, where the women were slumbering, with his breechloader in hand. He was never more wide awake and was sure he would remain so for hours to come. Wharton had offered to divide the duty with him in acting as sentinel, but our hero preferred to keep the matter in his own hands. He was sure his friend did not realize the full peril of their situation.

The stillness was broken only by the peculiar cries in the jungle, which it may be said were never wholly silent. First on the right, then on the left, then from the front, and again from different points on both sides of the stream he heard the sounds, some faint and far away, with others alarmingly close. The hoarse snarl of the tiger, the finer cry of the leopard, the squawking of night birds, with other noises that he could not identify, were continually in the air. Had they been heard for the first time he would have been in a tremor of fear and nervousness; but man soon becomes accustomed to danger, and the nearest must come still nearer to cause his pulse an additional throb.

Jack Everson was sensible that through this medley of strange noises there was one sound that was continuous and never changing. So faint that at first he and Wharton failed to notice it, it now impressed itself too distinctly upon his consciousness for him to be mistaken. It was a low, steady hum or moaning, such as the traveller hears when miles inland from the ocean. He could not identify it, though he made several guesses, and was still speculating unsatisfactorily, when he received a startling reminder that there was a new peril at his very feet.

The first notice was a faint purring sound, as if made by a gigantic cat, accompanied by a rustling of the vegetation scarcely a dozen feet away. He instantly grasped his rifle with both hands and was alert. It was impossible to distinguish ordinary objects in the gloom, but suddenly two small circles glittered with a greenish light and the purring was succeeded by a low, cavernous growl. Then it all became clear to him: a royal Bengal tiger was stealing upon the boat and was probably gathering himself for a leap at that very moment.

Had all the occupants been asleep the frightful terror would have played sad havoc with them before they could defend themselves. As it was, it looked as if more than one fatality must follow his attack.

But for that phosphorescent gleam of the brute's eyes Jack Everson would not have been able to locate him, but the glow of the two objects defined the outlines and locality of the horrible thing as unmistakably as if the sun were overhead. The occasion was one in which everything depended upon promptness. The tiger was likely to shift his position and turn his head so that the eyes would fail to show.

Jack reflected that there probably were a number of spots in the anatomy of the jungle terror that were more vulnerable than others; that a well-aimed bullet might be instantly fatal in one, while able to inflict only a partial wound in another. Be that as it may, he was sure that a conical bullet driven between the eyes and through bone, muscle and brain by a rifle that could kill a man at the distance of a mile must do effective work when that brain was not a dozen feet distant from the muzzle of the weapon. At any rate, there was no time for inquiry and he did not hesitate.

Aiming for a point midway between the gleaming orbs he pressed the trigger. It takes a well-aimed weapon to kill a royal Bengal tiger, even at a short distance, but Jack's rifle was well aimed. The tiny sphere of lead darted through the brain and along the spinal marrow as if fired with the vicious energy of a charge of dynamite.

It so happened that the tiger was in the act of making his graceful but fearful leap that was to land him upon the breast of the young man, who had risen to his feet just before firing. The check at that instant produced a queer result, the like of which is not often seen. The shock of the bullet crashing into the head of the muscular beast at the instant he was calling into play his prodigious strength intensified that strength to a sudden and astonishing degree. The consequence was that the tiger, instead of making the leap he intended, made one twice as great and overshot the mark. From out the gloom the beautiful sinewy body, of which only a glimpse could be caught, emerged as if fired from the throat of a Columbiad and, curving over the shoulders of the man and the boat, dropped into the stream with a splash that sent the water flying in every direction.

Beyond the line of shadow, where the faint moonlight fell upon him, the tiger was seen to be a beast of extraordinary size. He emitted one rasping snarl while sailing through the air, but was already dead when he fell into the water, where it could not be seen he had made a struggle. The sinewy body dipped out of sight, bobbed up again and the next minute was swept beyond view by the rapid current.

Rather strangely, not one of the women was awakened by the report of the rifle so near them, and of the men Dr. Marlowe and Anderson were the only ones who rose to a sitting posture and anxiously inquired the cause of the firing.

"I discovered an animal prowling near the boat," replied Jack, who thought it well not to disturb them with the whole truth, "and I winged him."

“You are sure you killed him?” asked the doctor; “most likely it was a tiger.”

“I am quite sure of that, and am just as sure that, considered strictly as a tiger, he is of no further account. I made another bull’s-eye in his case.”

“How many is that?” asked the physician, entering into the spirit of the jest.

“My fifth, counting only those that I am sure of.”

“You are doing well; keep it up; let the good work go on,” replied the elder, again adjusting himself for slumber, quite content to leave the valiant young American in charge of the boat and its occupants. Jack had it in mind to question him about that distant murmuring sound that puzzled him, but when ready to do so he discovered that the doctor was again asleep and he did not disturb him.

The fact that one denizen of the jungle had paid the boat a visit was ground for looking for a call from another. Jack remained, therefore, on the alert, and though under ordinary circumstances he would have fallen asleep he kept wide awake until the growing light in the sky told of the coming day. Before the sun was fairly above the horizon all were astir. They bathed faces and hands in the roiled water and greeted one another with thankfulness that the night had passed without harm to any member of the little company.

When the three men and their wives fled from Meerut they took with them enough food to last for several days. There is little excuse for people dying of starvation in any part of India, though sad to say it is only recently that thousands were swept away by famine. Fruit is abundant and little meat is necessary in hot countries. Before the morning meal was partaken of Jack Everson asked Dr. Marlowe to explain the cause of the low moaning noise that had been in his ears for moat of the night. The elder listened for a minute and replied:

“What I expected! We are very near the head of navigation; that sound comes from falls or rapids, above which we cannot go with this boat.”

This announcement precipitated a discussion as to what was the best course to follow. The physician left no doubt of his sentiments.

“The devils will be prowling up this stream within a few hours; I should not be surprised if they are near us this moment; the boat is of no further use to us.”

The three, Anderson, Turner and Wharton, did not agree with him. The craft had served them so well that they were unwilling to abandon it. They seemed to believe that it offered a much safer means of defense than they could find anywhere on land.

“But you cannot stay forever on it,” protested the doctor impatiently.

“We do not expect to,” replied Anderson; “we may decide to descend to the Ganges again, and continue down the river.”

“Whither?”

“To Cawnpore or some point nearer.”

The doctor was aghast.

“You mean to leap straight into the hornet’s nest; those are the places, of all others, that must be avoided.”

“It may be as you say, but I am hopeful that the English garrisons have been able to hold out against the mutineers.”

“It is a woeful mistake, my friend; if you persist in it we must part company.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SOUND OF FIRING.

Jack Everson was hardly less impatient than the doctor over the obstinacy of their lately made friends. He reminded them that the physician had spent a score of years in that part of the world, with which he was so familiar that his judgment ought to outweigh theirs, but the argument was useless. They had decided to stick to the boat that had served them so well and could not be dissuaded. Their plan, as they had intimated, now that they found they could go little further up stream, was to descend to the Ganges, with a view of working their way down to some of the cities, where they hoped to find the English had succeeded in holding out against the mutineers.

Could this be done, and could such a haven be reached, all would be well, but the doctor assured them they were leaning upon a broken reed. When it became evident that all persuasions were useless the parties separated. A common peril had brought them near to one another and it was impossible that that they should part except as friends. All felt the solemnity of the hour. Each wife kissed and embraced Mary Marlowe, and like her shed tears at what they felt was probably the final parting, so far as this world was concerned. The men warmly shook hands and there was more than one tremulous voice when the three passed over the side of the boat and said farewell.

The latter walked some distance through the jungle, which was so dense that they were obliged to follow one of the numerous paths made by the animals in going to and coming from the water. The doctor, by virtue of his superior knowledge, took the lead, with his daughter close behind, and Jack Everson bringing up the rear. They were silent and thoughtful, for their spirits were oppressed by a deep gloom and the feeling that something dreadful impended.

Not far off the path which they were following expanded into a natural clearing two or three rods in extent. When they reached the spot the doctor halted and faced his companions.

“I now know where we are,” he said in an undertone; “we have to follow this path a little way back, when we enter a hilly and rough country, where the jungle is more open. It is cut up by numerous trails like this, most of which have been made by the feet of wild animals, but one of them leads northward and finally enters a highway, which if followed far enough will land us in the Nepaul country.”

“I assume from what you have said that it will not be safe to stick to this road?” said Jack.

“No; for two or three days while travelling over it we shall be in constant danger; our task will be to make our way over it without attracting the notice of any of our enemies who are scouring the country for us.”

“Is the thing possible?”

“I should not undertake it did I not think so; the danger will threaten for probably a hundred miles, though growing steadily less as we proceed.”

“Will it not be safer to do our travelling by night?” asked the daughter.

“That is what I mean to do after reaching the more plainly marked path, which connects with the highway. I see no risk in pushing through the jungle by day, since the only foes we are likely to encounter are four-footed ones. If we meet any such we must refrain from firing, since the reports of our guns will be sure to draw attention to us. I mean, of course,” explained the doctor, “that our weapons are not to be appealed to unless there is no escape otherwise, as was the case with the tiger.”

While he was speaking, Mary gave a faint gasp and caught his arm. She and Jack were facing the point toward which his back was turned. Seeing that it was something behind him that had startled both, the doctor turned his head. As if to emphasize the words just spoken, he saw an immense spotted leopard, motionless in the trail not more than fifty feet away. Evidently he was trotting to the stream, when he caught sight of the three persons, stopped short, raised his head and stared wonderingly at them.

The leopard shares the reputation of the tiger for deadly ferocity and daring. When more than 20,000 persons are killed in India every year by wild animals and serpents, it will be found that the leopard is one of the most active among these factors of death, and holds his own well up with the tiger.

Like the venomous serpent, the leopard had a terrible beauty all his own. As he stood with head raised, eyes glaring, mouth slightly parted and his long tail lashing his sides with a force that made the thumping against his glossy ribs plainly audible, his pose was perfect. What a picture he made!

The question that was to be quickly answered was whether the fearful brute would allow himself to be turned aside from the path and withdraw again into the jungle with his thirst unslaked. If he did he would not be molested; if he presumed to advance upon the party, whom he evidently held in slight fear, let him be prepared for the consequences!

Jack Everson fumbled his rifle and looked with sparkling eyes at the beast.

“What a chance for another bull’s-eye!” he said, in a low voice. “I would take him right between and above his forelegs, where I should be sure of reaching his heart.”

“Don’t fire unless he advances to attack us,” warned the elder.

It would be hard to say what induced the leopard to retreat, for, as has been said, he is one of the most dangerous denizens of the jungle; but, while our friends were expecting a charge from him, he wheeled about and trotted off.

“It looks as if he had learned something of your skill,” remarked the doctor with a smile.

Again, while the words were in the mouth of the speaker, he was interrupted, this time in a more terrifying manner than before.

From the direction of the stream which they had left but a short time previous, and undoubtedly from the boat itself, came the reports of firearms. There were no shouts or outcries, but the firing was rapid and apparently made by gun and pistol.

“They have been attacked!” exclaimed Mary; “we must go to their help!”

She impulsively started along the path, but her father seized her arm and said sternly:

“Remain here! It is no place for you; Jack and I will do what we can.”

Perhaps in the excitement of the moment the parent did not fully comprehend the danger of leaving his daughter alone in the jungle, even at so slight a distance and for so brief a time as he anticipated, with nothing but a revolver as a means of defence; but he and Jack Everson were eager to rush to the aid of their friends, and they hurried over the trail without even looking back at her.

The young man was slightly behind his companion and both broke into a loping trot. Each held his rifle in hand, on the alert to use it the instant the opportunity presented itself.

It will be borne in mind that the distance from the slight natural opening to the boat was short, and a few minutes sufficed for the two men to cover it; but a strange thing happened. The reports of firearms which had broken out with such suddenness ceased with the same abruptness, and the silence because of the contrast was tenfold more oppressive than before.

“What can that mean?” asked Jack, as his companion slackened his pace.

“*It means that they are through*!” replied the doctor, whose face was of deathly paleness. “My God! what have we escaped!”

“We shall soon know,” replied Jack, catching the awful significance of the words; and then he added to himself:

“We may have escaped it, but for how long?”

A few rods further and they were at the side of the stream, and the boat loomed to view through the thick undergrowth and vegetation.

CHAPTER XV.

GONE!

Neither Jack Everson nor Dr. Marlowe forgot his own personal danger in hurrying to the help of their imperilled friends. If the two were too late to be of any assistance they were imminently likely to precipitate themselves into the same whirlpool of woe and death. They had slowed their gait to a walk as they neared the spot, and when they caught the dim outlines of the boat the two stood still.

So far as they could see there was no change in its surroundings. It was still moored against the bank, so close that any one could step aboard, but no sign of living person was visible on or about it. There was something so uncanny in it all that but for their mutual knowledge they would have doubted the evidence of their senses.

“I don’t understand it,” whispered Jack. “Suppose you stay here while I steal nigh enough to learn something that will help clear up the horrible mystery.”

“You are running frightful risk,” said the doctor; “I cannot advise you to try it.”

“All the same, I shall do it.”

Thus, it will be observed that the three persons composing the little party became separated from one another for greater or less distances. The daughter was waiting, two or three hundred yards away, for the return of her father and lover, while they had just parted company, though they expected to remain in sight of each other.

Dr. Marlowe stood in the path, partly sheltering himself behind a couple of tree trunks, but with his eyes fixed upon his young friend, who walked cautiously but unhesitatingly forward. Jack held his rifle in a trailing position at his side, his shoulders bent slightly forward, while he stepped lightly, his senses alert, like those of a scout entering the camp of an enemy. That he was running into great danger was self-evident, but he was determined not to turn back until he learned something of the strange occurrences.

Watching his young friend, the doctor saw him stop when at the side of the motionless boat. His profile showed first on one side and then, on the other, while he listened for the slightest sound that could give an atom of knowledge. Apparently the effort was useless, for the next moment he placed his left hand on the gunwale and vaulted lightly upon deck. He stood a few moments as if transfixed, then turning abruptly about leaped to the ground, and, breaking into a run, hurried back to his friend, who noticed that his face was more ghastly than before, while his eyes stared as if they still looked upon unutterable things.

“What is it?” asked the elder in a ghostly whisper.

“My God! don’t ask me to tell!”

“You forget that we are both physicians.”

“But not that we are human beings; thank Heaven forever that you did not look upon the sight my eyes saw a moment ago. Let it suffice, doctor, to say that of the three men and women to whom we bade good-bye within the past twenty minutes not one is alive! The fiends have been there.”

Not the least singular fact connected with this hideous incident was that the devils who committed the unspeakable crime had vanished, so far as could be seen, as utterly as if the ground had opened beneath their feet and swallowed them. Two men had come back upon the scene within a few minutes after all this was done, and yet the doers were nowhere in sight. What was the meaning of their hasty departure?

It was unreasonable to think they had gone far. They must be in the vicinity. They must have noticed the absence of the doctor and his companions; doubtless they were looking for them along shore; possibly they had started over some of the trails and ere long would strike the one along which the three had fled.

“A wonderful Providence has preserved us thus far,” said Jack Everson; “but it is too much to expect we shall emerge unscathed from this hell hole.”

“I hope nothing will happen to Mary before we rejoin her.”

“We shall be with her in a minute.”

Nevertheless, a vague fear disturbed both. The parent was again leading, and he unconsciously hastened his footsteps. Only a slight distance beyond they came to the small opening where they had left her standing but a brief while before. Since the men had passed over the intervening distance to the river it was unlikely that anything had occurred to alarm the young woman, but there was no saying what might happen in those times and in that part of the world.

The real shock came to the parent when he turned in the trail and saw the open space but failed to observe his daughter. He hurried on without speaking, but Jack, directly behind him, had made the discovery, for a moment he was so breathless and dizzy that he barely saved himself from falling. His heart became lead, and the awful conviction got hold of him that the most woeful affliction of all had come upon them, and that his betrothed was lost irrecoverably.

But the sight of the anguish of the parent when he turned about and faintly gasped, “Where is my child?” brought the self-command of the young man back.

It was the despairing question wrung from the heart of the parent, with a grief that was no keener than that of Jack Everson himself. Here was another instance of the appalling suddenness with which tragedies began and were completed in this infernal country. A band of half a dozen was cut off within the space of a few minutes, and now, in still less time, a young woman vanished as if she had never been.

Jack did not dare trust his voice in the effort to speak, but when his eyes met those of the parent he shook his head, saying by the gesture:

“God have mercy, I cannot answer.”

But strong men do not remain dazed and helpless in the presence of a shuddering calamity. If any one thing could be set down as certain it was that Miss Marlowe had left the place by fleeing deeper into the jungle. She could not have approached them without being observed: therefore they must seek her by taking the same direction.

The energy of the man more than threescore under the spur of his anguish was like that of the athlete of one-third of his years. He still led the way, and, after the brief halt under the fearful blow, he rallied and compelled Jack Everson to keep upon a trot to save himself from falling behind.

A hundred paces from the opening they reached a point where the trails forked. They stopped, the parent being the first to do so.

“Jack,” said he, using the less formal name, for under the awful shadow they had drawn nearer to each other, “we can’t afford to make any mistake.”

“There shall be none if you tell me how to prevent it.”

“She must have followed one of these paths, but who shall say which?”

He stooped over and peered at the ground. Within the dim hush of the jungle he was unable to discern the slightest disturbance of the earth.

“No use of that,” said the doctor, reading his intention; “therefore we will separate; one of us will overtake them.”

“Have you any idea of the identity of these devils?”

“I think they are Ghoojurs, but it makes no difference; Mussulmans and Hindoos are the same; each of us has a rifle and revolver; if you get sight of them don’t wait to notify me; shoot to kill; you know how to do it.”

“I shall shrink from nothing, but the case may be hopeless.”

“If it is will you promise me one thing?” asked, the parent of the young man looking him in the eye.

“I do; what is the pledge?”

“That you point your gun at her?”

CHAPTER XVI.

A SHADOWY PURSUIT.

It was a fearful pledge to exact, but Jack Everson gave it without hesitation.

"You understand me; enough; let us lose no more time; I will turn to the right; good-bye; we are all in the hands of God."

There was not a tear in the eye of the parent. His heart might be torn by grief, but he was now the Roman from whose lips no murmuring was heard.

It seemed to Jack Everson that the strangeness of the incidents of the past hour had lifted him into a state of exaltation. He never felt calmer nor more self-possessed than when hurrying over the path, rifle in hand, revolver at his hip with the belief that there was not one chance in a thousand that he would ever again look upon the one who had won his heart when the two were on the other side of the world and for whose sake he was ready to go to the uttermost lengths of the earth.

His feeling was: "They have stolen her from us, but by the Eternal she shall cost them dear!"

There was no thought of what all this implied to himself. He did not care what the consequences were, so far as he was concerned. It came to be a legend among the men desperately defending their families and themselves during the horrors of the Sepoy mutiny, that in fighting the unspeakable fiends, the European should save a bullet apiece for his dear ones and one for himself.

Such was the resolve of the young American who was now making all haste to find his beloved and her captors, and settling down into that resolution he acted with the coolness of a veteran.

The first truth that impressed itself upon him was that the path which he was following steadily ascended, being quite steep in many places. This showed as a matter of course that he was attaining higher ground. He was not familiar enough with the country to know that he was approaching a steep ridge of hills, for the doctor had told him nothing of the fact, and the elevated section had been passed in the boat at night. He observed, too, that his course trended to the right, proving that he was penetrating deeper into the country.

"If the line that the doctor is following holds straight on we must approach each other, but his may turn more than mine—confound it!"

He had reached a point where the paths forked again. Supposing he had been fortunate enough to take the right course at the beginning, how could he maintain it?

Swallowing his exasperation, he reflected coolly. The trail to the left was less travelled than the one which kept directly forward. He believed the Ghoojurs had kept to it possibly because there was less danger of pursuit. One fact was self-evident: nothing was to be gained by standing still, while there was a chance of accomplishing something by going on. With scarcely a minute’s hesitation he advanced at a rapid stride over the more faintly marked course, peering in advance for a glimpse of his enemies.

Since the latter had not gained much start it would seem that he ought to be close upon them, always provided he was traveling in their actual footsteps. The ground continued rough and broken, but it had no effect on his progress. Something like a shadow whisked across the path in front at the moment of his passing round a turn. Some animal had caught sight of him, and, scared by the vision, had leaped into the jungle at the side. Whether it was a tiger, leopard, cheetah, wild boar or another brute he did not know or care. If it dared to dispute his way he would shoot.

He was pressing forward in this reckless, desperate fashion, when he dropped as if he had collided with a stone wall, and his heart almost ceased its beating. He had caught the faint report of a firearm. It came from a point on his right and sounded as if caused by a revolver, rather than a larger weapon. The thought that came to him was that it was the pistol of Mary Marlowe!

“She is at bay; she may have fired it at herself, and yet I do not think she would do that until some of the bullets had reached the wretches who have captured her. I am following the wrong path, for this one leads me away from her.”

Without an instant’s hesitation he turned and began his return on a loping trot. He was incensed with himself because of his mistake, and yet there was no reasonable cause for such feeling, but grief is as thoughtless as love, and he was stirred to the very depth of his soul by both. Reaching the last forking, he did not pause, but set out over the main trail.

In front of him towered a mass of rocks higher than any he had yet seen. The path wound about these, but instead of following it, he climbed to the highest part.

“I may gain sight of something from up there,” was his thought as he pushed on, “that will be of some help.”

And he did see something from the crest which fairly took away his breath.

CHAPTER XVII.

ALMOS.

Mary Marlowe was an obedient daughter, and when her father checked her move to go to the aid of the imperilled ones on the boat, and peremptorily ordered her to wait where she was, she obeyed without protest. She would have been glad to bear them company, but knew she would be more of a hindrance than a help.

It was less than five minutes after the disappearance of her father and betrothed when she was frightened by hearing a slight sound directly behind her in the path. Her thought naturally was that some wild animal was stealing upon her, but the first glance told a more dreadful story. Five men, who, from their ragged, scant attire, their dark complexion and wild expression of features, she knew to belong to the terrible bandits called Ghoojurs, had come upon her unnoticed, and pausing within a half dozen paces, were looking fixedly at her.

The sight was so startling that the young woman gasped and recoiled. She would have fled after her friends had not the leader made a gesture, accompanied by the command:

“Stay where you are or you shall be killed! I know you as the daughter of the doctor, and we seek you and him.”

Each of the Ghoojurs carried a long, muzzle-loading gun, and every one had a yataghan thrust into a girdle around his waist, the weapon being a foot or more in length, and with a point of needle-like fineness. The leader spoke in Hindustani, which was as familiar to the young woman as her own tongue.

The young woman possessed quick wit. She could not doubt that the five, including Almos and Mustad, were now her deadly enemies. Whether they had taken part in the massacre of those left on the boat could not be conjectured, but the probabilities were the other way, since it would have been well-nigh impossible for them to reach their present position from the river without colliding with Dr. Marlowe and Jack Everson.

Mary showed her shrewdness by acting as if the two men were the friends they had always shown themselves when their former meetings took place.

“Why, Almos,” she said, forcing a smile in which there was no pleasure, “we have not met before since you came to my home and my father gave you medicine that cured your illness. How do you do?”

And she had the courage to advance a step and offer her dainty hand, but the brute refused it. With a shake of his head he retreated a step and said:

“My caste will not allow me.”

“But it allowed you to take drink and food from my hand and medicine from that of my father,” she said, stung by the repulse.

“I did evil, for which Allah has pardoned me; the faithful have been summoned to drive the infidels from India; the followers of Islam have heard the call, and they are flocking to the banner of the Prophet from all parts of Hindostan; not one infidel shall be left in all the land.”

During these few moments Mustad stood directly behind the leader, with a fixed grin in which there was a certain shamefacedness, for with all his fierce fanaticism he could not forget the gentle, sweet nature of the one who had become a prisoner nor the unvarying kindness he had received at her hands. True, the devil in his nature was roused, and there could be little question that he was acting as guide to these murderers while they hunted for the doctor and his family.

“And do you mean to help kill those who have been your friends, Mustad?” she asked, with her penetrating eyes fixed upon him.

Had the two been alone, it is possible the edge would have been taken off the response, but with four Ghoojurs at his elbow, and one of them the furious Almos, he dared not be behind them in savagery.

“This is a war for our deen; when we fight for that we know none but the followers of the Prophet! The Inglese loge stole our homes and our land from us! They have put lard on the cartridges of the Sepoys that the faithful may become unclean and be shut out of paradise! I hate them all! I have no friends among them! I shall never sheath my knife nor stay my hand while one remains alive in India.”

“Let it be as you say,” she calmly replied, seeing that it was useless to hold converse with the wretch.

Her wish was to keep the party where they were until Jack and her father could have time to return. Here would be an opportunity for the young man to make a few more bull’s-eyes, but Almos was too wise to run the risk. He was not afraid to fight two men, even though not so well armed as they, but his wish was first to place the young woman beyond their reach—for when the fight came it would be to the death.

“No harm shall come to you,” said the leader in a gentler tone. “Walk forward over the path and we will guard you against harm.”

“Whither do you intend to take me?” she asked, debating whether to obey or to make a fight then and there and force matters to an issue.

“To Akwar.”

“Why there?”

“To place you among friends that your enemies may not reach you.”

“Why not take me to my home?”

“It has been burned and the men are hiding among the trees that they may slay you when you and your father return.”

After a moment’s hesitation she obeyed, taking the path along which her parent soon after pressed in the desperate effort to recover her from her captors.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DOCTOR AND PATIENT.

The bright wits of Miss Marlowe were active. Mustad took the lead along the path, she following next, while Almos, the leader of the Ghoojurs, and his three companions, brought up the rear. Like most of the trails through the Asiatic jungles, this was inclosed on each side by a growth of trees, undergrowth and matted vegetation of such density that it was next to impossible for any one to pick his way forward or backward except by keeping within the path itself. To step aside into the jungle would immediately involve one in so inextricable a tangle that he could move only with the greatest difficulty.

An attempt to escape, therefore, by darting to one side was not to be thought of, and she knew that her only hope lay with her absent friends. She was confident that they would speedily return, and, finding her gone, start in immediate pursuit. A collision between them and the Ghoojurs was imminent.

The latter acted as if their only interest lay in their prisoner. So far as she could judge no attention was paid to the rear, whence the danger of attack threatened. The place of Mustad, at the head, confirmed her suspicion that he had been playing the part of guide for the rest from the first.

She did not doubt that her home and its contents had been burned by the wretches, but under the circumstances the matter gave her little concern. She was inclined to believe that her captors meant to conduct her into the town of Akwar, nearby, and with her knowledge of the fanatical hatred of the population against all Christians she still hoped to find some friends there who would protect her from harm. And thus it was that she was not in the state of collapse or despair that might be supposed.

Suddenly a pistol was fired from some point at the rear beyond her captors, and out of sight. All the men instantly stopped, grasped their arms and looked back, the young woman doing the same. Her thought was: “That was father or Jack, but he did not hit any one; therefore, it wasn’t Jack.”

While the six were looking expectantly to the rear Dr. Marlowe, his face flushed, and his whole appearance, showing his intense excitement, came into sight. He was panting from his severe exertion, and raised his hand as a signal for the Ghoojurs to wait for him. It is probable that he would have received a shot, but for an interruption that was as unexpected as it was remarkable. Almos, the leader of the Ghoojurs, emitted a yell that could have been heard a half-mile away, and leaped several feet in the air, while his companions with exclamations of terror hastily recoiled from him.

“Great Allah! He has been bitten!” exclaimed the horrified Mustad, almost knocking the young woman off her feet in his rush towards his master; but one of the others had perceived the monstrous cobra, and, clubbing his gun, he beat the life out of it with one blow, before it could glide away into the jungle. It looked as if this part of the country was specially pestered by the dreadful reptiles.

Almos knew he was doomed. All hope had vanished, and, dropping to the ground, he bared his bronzed ankle, looked at the tiny points where the horrible poison had been injected into his system, and then, like the fatalist be was, he calmly folded his arms and waited for the last moment that was rushing upon him. He was a faithful follower of the Prophet and knew how to meet the inevitable that awaits us all. His companions, awed and silent, stood around, unable to say or do anything that could give him comfort. Miss Marlowe, after walking part way to the group, paused and looked at them and at her father, who was hurrying to the spot. She wondered that Almos had permitted the killing of the cobra, since the snake is looked upon as sacred in India, and few natives can be induced to injure one. The Ghoojurs probably slew it in the flurry of the moment.

Dr. Marlowe had heard the cry and noted the excitement, but did not suspect the cause until he drew near the spot. Then Mustad, familiar with the skill of the medical man, beckoned to him and said:

“Make haste, great sahib, Almos has been bitten by a snake; no one can save him but you.”

The stricken chief, from his seat on the ground, looked up in the face of the white man, of whose wonderful skill he had received proof in his own self. The countenance of the Ghoojur was of ashen hue, and the yearning expression of his eyes told of the hope that had been kindled within his breast.

Now that the physician had dropped into what may be called his professional character, he was himself again. He set down the caba containing his instruments, and medicaments, adjusted his glasses, and stooping over, intently studied the wound made by the cobra. Then he drew out his watch, as if he were timing the pulse beats of a patient.

“It is one minute and a half since you were bitten,” he said, still holding the timepiece in his hand, but looking into the face of Almos; “in three more minutes and a half no power but Allah can save you.”

Catching the full meaning of these words, the Ghoojur leader quivered with suddenly renewed hope.

“Can you save me?” he asked in Hindustani.

“I have in there,” replied the physician, tapping his caba with his long forefinger, “that which will render the bite of the snake as harmless as the peck of a bird that flies in the air, but barely three minutes remain in which to apply it.”

“Then I beseech you, do not wait,” said the eager Almos, shoving his foot towards the doctor; “great is the English doctor; be quick; why do you tarry?”

“Before I heal you,” replied Dr. Marlowe, with maddening deliberation, “I must be paid my fee; I have attended you before and refused to accept what you offered, but now I demand payment before applying the remedy."

"You shall have it; name it, I beg you; all that I have shall be yours if you will save me, but haste, O great physician, haste!"

"It is strong, and will do its work well, if it be given the chance."

He next drew out a lancet, with its edge like a razor's. Almos breathlessly watched him, but when he expected the doctor to begin work, he leaned back and said:

"Why should I bring you back from death, when you are seeking the lives of my daughter and myself? The best thing I can do is to let you die, as you will do in two minutes and a half more," he added, looking again at his watch; "the venom of the cobra works fast and it will soon strike your heart."

"You promised to save me if I would pay you in advance.

"So I will."

"Name your fee; be quick with it!"

"It is that you and the rest of the Ghoojurs shall leave me and mine alone; that you shall depart at once; that you shall not attempt to follow, nor harm us in any way. Without that pledge on your part, I shall let you die like the dog that you are. What is your answer?"

"I promise; I promise!" exclaimed Almos, almost beside himself with excitement and renewed hope. "I will guide you through the jungle to a safe point, and will watch over you till all danger is gone."

"You have given me your promise, but you may break it; swear by the mantle of the Prophet, or I shall let you die."

"I swear by the mantle of the Prophet!" the Ghoojur chieftain fairly shrieked, "that I will do as I have promised! Quick, quick, or it will be too late!"

"You have made the most sacred vow that a Mussulman can make; I will test it by saving your life."

CHAPTER XIX.
ASIATIC HONOR.

One quick movement with the lancet made an incision across the red specks left by the fangs of the cobra, and into the opening he poured a teaspoonful of the yellowish fluid, which was so much like liquid fire and pepper that even the dusky scoundrel gasped with agony. Then he was made to open his mouth and swallow something from a large bottle, which, as regards strength and flavor, was a twin of that which was consuming his flesh.

All at once the countenance of the physician expanded with a beaming smile as he looked at his patient and said gently as if speaking to his own child:

“All danger is past, Almos.”

From the abundance of rags which fluttered about his person, the doctor tore a piece and bandaged the wound. Then he said in a business-like tone:

“I am through; now you and the rest of you may go.”

Almos hesitated.

“You have saved my life: is there nothing I can do for you?”

“I have just told you what to do—*leave*?”

Probably there would have been less promptness in complying with the command had there been less in uttering it. As it was, Almos, without a word, motioned to the rest of his band, and led the way down the path in the direction of the stream, the four tramping after him like so many ragged phantoms.

Dr. Marlowe was more eager to leave the place than he would permit his child to know. He had no faith in Almos’s promise, knowing that the Ghoojur chieftain would break his oath, which he and his brother fanatics did not consider binding when made to infidels, and the only hope, therefore, was for the fugitives to conceal themselves from the miscreants—a thing which the physician’s intimate knowledge of the country would enable him to do.

Footfalls sounded along the path over which the two had just come, and a minute later Almos, Mustad and their three companions emerged into the opening and approached the couple, one of whom suspected nothing until her father spoke.

“Well, Almos, what do you want?” demanded Dr. Marlowe, calmly looking up at the Ghoojur chieftain, as he paused in front of him and made a salaam.

“We have come for the infidel and his daughter; our deen commands us to put them to death.”

“What does the oath you gave me a little while ago command you to do?”

“That was made to an infidel; it is not binding upon a true son of the Prophet.”

“A true son of the devil!” exclaimed the physician, unable to repress his rage.

Turning to his daughter, he said:

“My child, you have a pistol; when they make a move, shoot; leave Almos to me and save your last bullet for yourself.”

“The infidels shall be destroyed everywhere,” said Almos; “none of the Inglese loge shall be left in India. The faithful have risen and they will crush them all, for so commands the Prophet——”

Dr. Marlowe had placed his hand on the butt of his revolver at his hip, meaning to whip out the weapon and fire before the miscreant had finished his high-sounding tomfoolery. His daughter had also grasped hers, intending to obey to the letter the command of her parent, when the Ghoojur chieftain abruptly paused in his speech, staggered for a moment, and then sank to the ground like a bundle of rags, with the breath of life gone from his body.

The incident would have been as inexplicable to parent and child as to the Ghoojurs, had they not caught the faint, far-away report of a rifle, which, if heard by the bandits, was not associated by them with the startling thing that had taken place before their eyes. But the doctor and Mary knew the connection.

And about half-a-mile away, on the top of that huge rock, hot enough under the flaming sun to roast eggs, Jack Everson had assumed the same position that he held the afternoon before on the bank of the Ganges, when he checked the advance of the Ghoojur horsemen across the river. With the aid of the glasses, he had descried the forms of his beloved and her father when the bright eyes failed to detect his own. Then, when about to start to join them, he observed their visitors, and the glass again helped to identify them, after which he “proceeded to business.”

The instant he made his aim sure he pulled the trigger, came to a sitting position, readjusted a cartridge, and placing the glasses to his eyes that he might see the more plainly, watched the result of his shot.

“By Jove; another bull’s-eye!” he gleefully exclaimed, as he saw his man stagger and fall almost at the feet of Dr. Marlowe. “I don’t know the gentleman’s name, but a first-class obituary notice is in order. That makes six, and now for the seventh. I really hope the doctor is keeping score for me.”

The professional eye of the physician saw where the pellet of lead had passed through the chest of Almos, but it was not observed by Mustad or the other Ghoojurs, who probably attributed it in some way to the bite of the cobra, in spite of the miraculous cure that seemed to have been wrought before their eyes. The three remained in the background, but the fall of the leader appeared to add flames to the hatred of Mustad, who, assuming the mantle of the fallen chieftain, stepped to the front.

“You shall not escape us!” he hissed; “all the Inglese loge shall die!”

“But before any more of them perish, you shall go to the infernal regions to keep company with the imp that has just gone thither.”

The doctor had learned from the exhibition of the preceding afternoon the time required by Jack Everson to repeat his marvelous shots. He knew, therefore, about the moment when a second was due, and he decided to make its arrival as dramatic as possible.

“You stand almost on the same spot where stood Almos; he dropped dead before me, and,” raising his hand impressively, “I command you to do the same.”

Mustad obeyed.

Again the faint report swept across the extent of jungle, travelling with almost the same speed as the bullet, which, like its predecessor, bored through the dusky chest of the victim and lost itself in the vegetation beyond. Mustad gasped, convulsively clasped one hand to his breast, flung out both arms, groped blindly for an instant, and then slumped down as dead as one of the mummies of the Pyramids.

And the young American, still reclining on that gray, blistering rock, again rose to a sitting posture and clapped the glasses to his eyes to observe more clearly the result of his last trial at markmanship.

“That makes seven bull’s-eyes!” was his delighted exclamation, “but I have done as well when the distance was twice as great. I must keep the number in mind, for it will be like the doctor to insist that I made but six out of a possible eight. I notice that three gentlemen are left and require attention.”

With the same care as before, he lay back and drew bead on the group, but the next moment uttered an impatient exclamation and straightened up again.

“They have fled; only Mary and her father are left, and there’s no call to send any bullets in their direction.”

The fall of Mustad at the command of the wrathful physician was more than the other Ghoojurs could stand. Suspecting no connection between the almost inaudible reports and the terrifying incidents, they believed their only hope was in headlong flight. Without a word they dashed down the trail, quickly passing from sight, and were seen no more.

Meanwhile Jack Everson, finding no demand for long shooting, sprang from the rock and made all haste to the spot where he had recognized his friends, and where they awaited his coming with an anxiety that could not have been more intense. That others of their enemies were in the neighborhood was certain, and their vengeance could not be restrained or turned aside as had been that of the Ghoojurs. A collision between them and the fugitives must be fatal to the latter.

Great, therefore, was the delight of father and daughter when the brave fellow bounded into sight, his whole concern, as it seemed, being to learn whether the score kept by the doctor agreed with his own. When assured that it did, he announced that he was at the disposal of the venerable physician and his daughter.

The three pushed steadily toward Nepaul, cheered by the knowledge that with every mile passed their danger lessened. They were in great peril more than once. Twice they exchanged shots with marauding bands, and once their destruction seemed inevitable; but good fortune attended them, and at the end of a week they entered the wild, mountainous and sparsely-settled region, where at last all danger was at an end.

So it came about that when the young people took their final departure down the Ganges for Calcutta, thence to return to the United States, Dr. Marlowe went with them. He and his son-in-law formed a partnership in the practice of their profession, and it is only a few years since that the aged physician was laid to rest. He was full of years and honors, and willing to go, for he knew that the happiness of his daughter could be in no safer hands than those of Jack Everson.

LOST IN THE WOODS.

CHAPTER I.
THE CABIN IN THE WOOD.

Harvey Bradley had been superintendent of the Rollo Mills not quite a year when, to his annoyance, the first strike in their history took place.

Young Bradley was a college graduate, a trained athlete, and a bright and ambitious man, whose father was president of the company in New York which owned the extensive mills. It was deemed best to have a direct representative of the corporation on the ground, and Harvey qualified himself for the responsible situation by a six-months’ apprenticeship, during all of which he wrought as hard as any laborer in the establishment.

He made his home in the remote village of Bardstown, where the Rollo Mills had been built. He lived with his Aunt Maria, (who went all the way from New York with her favorite nephew that she might look after him), and his sister Dollie, only six years old. The plan was that she should stay until Christmas, when her father was to come and take her home. Aunt Maria, with the help of honest Maggie Murray, kept house for Harvey, who found his hands and brains fully occupied in looking after the interests of the Rollo Mills, which gave employment to two hundred men, women and children.

All went well with the young superintendent for some months after the assumption of his duties. He was alert, and surprised every one by his practical knowledge. He was stern and strict, and, after warning several negligent employes, discharged them. This did not help his popularity, but, so long as the directors were satisfied, Harvey cared for the opinion of no one else.

When dull times came, Superintendent Bradley scaled down the wages of all, including his own. The promise to restore them, as soon as business warranted the step, averted the threatened strike. Within a month the restoration took place, but every employe was required to work a half hour over time without additional pay.

A strike was averted for the time, but the friendly feeling and mutual confidence that ought to exist between the employer and the employed was destroyed. The latter kept at work, and the former felt that he had not sacrificed his dignity nor his discipline.

But the discontent increased. One day Hugh O’Hara, the chief foreman, and Thomas Hansell, one of the most influential of the workmen, called upon Mr. Bradley, and speaking for the employes, protested against the new arrangement. They said every man, woman and child was willing to work the extra half hour, but inasmuch as the need for such extra time indicated an improvement in business, they asked for the additional pay to which they were clearly entitled.

Harvey was looking for such protest and he was prepared. He said it was an error to think there was an improvement in business. While in one sense it might be true, yet the price of the manufactured goods had fallen so low that the mills really made less money than before. The wages that had been paid were better than were warranted by the state of trade. Now, when the employes were asked to help in a slight degree their employers who had done so much for them, they would not do so. O’Hara and Hansell, showing a wish to discuss the matter, the superintendent cut them short by saying that it was idle to talk further. He would not make any reduction in their time, nor would he pay any extra compensation.

That night 200 employes of the Rollo Mills quit work, with the intention of staying out until justice was done them. Harvey asserted that he would never yield; he would spend a few days in overhauling the machinery and in making a few needed repairs; then, if the employes chose, they could come back. All who did not do so would not be taken back afterwards. New hands would be engaged and in a short time the mills would be running the same as before.

O’Hara and Hansell warned the superintendent that serious trouble would follow any such course. While making no threat themselves, they told him that blood was likely to be shed. Harvey pooh-poohed and reminded them that a few men and children would make sorry show in fighting the whole state, for, in the event of interference by the strikers, he meant to appeal to the authorities.

The repairs needed at the mills were soon made. Steam was gotten up and the whistle called the hands to work. Only O’Hara and Hansell came forward. They explained that all would be glad to take their places if the superintendent would allow them a slight increase of pay for overwork. They had held a meeting and talked over the matter, and now abated a part of their first demand; they were willing to accept one-half rate for overtime.

The superintendent would not yield a jot. The most that he would consent to do was to wait until noon for them to go to work. The two men went away muttering threats; not one of the hands answered the second call to work.

Quite sure that such would be the result, Harvey had telegraphed to Carville, fifty miles away, for sixty men, to take the place of those who had quit work. He asked only for men, since it would have been unwise to bring women and children to become involved in difficulties.

By some means this step became known, and, as is always the case, it added fuel to the flames. Warning notices were sent to the superintendent that if the new hands went to work they would be attacked; Bradley himself was told to keep out of sight unless ready to come to the terms of the strikers. Even in his own home, he could not be guaranteed safety. His house as well as the mills would be burnt.

Harvey felt no special alarm because of these threats; he did not believe that those who made them dare carry them out. But that night the mills escaped destruction only by the vigilance of the extra watchmen. The same evening Aunt Maria was stopped on the village street and told that it was best she should lose no time in moving away with her little niece Dollie, since it was more than likely the innocent would suffer with the guilty. For the first time, Harvey understood the earnestness of the men; but he clung to his resolution all the same.

You can see how easily the trouble could have been ended. The employes had abated their first demand and were willing to compromise. Had Harvey spoken his honest thoughts, he would have said the men were right, or at any rate he ought to have agreed to their proposal to submit the dispute to arbitration; but he was too proud to yield.

“They will take it for weakness on my part,” was his thought; “it will make an end of all system and open the way for demands that in the end will destroy the business.”

The sixty new hands reached Bardstown and were about as numerous as the men who wrought in the mills before the strike. They looked like a determined band, who would be able to take care of themselves in the troubles that impended.

The arrivals were received with scowls by the old employes, who hooted and jeered them as they marched grimly to the mills. No blows were struck, though more than once an outbreak was imminent. It was too late in the day to begin work, but the new hands were shown through the establishment, with a view of familiarizing them to some extent with their new duties. Most of them had had some experience in the same kind of work, but there was enough ignorance to insure much vexation and loss.

The night that followed was so quiet that Harvey believed the strikers had been awed by his threat to appeal to the law and by the determined front of the new men.

“It’s a dear lesson,” he said to himself, “but they need it, and it is high time it was taught to them.”

The next morning the whistle sent out its ear-splitting screech, whose echoes swung back and forth, like so many pendulums between the hills, but to the amazement of Harvey Bradley, not a person was seen coming toward the mills. The whistle called them again, and Hugh O’Hara and Tom Hansell strolled leisurely up the street to the office, where Mr. Bradley wonderingly awaited them.

“You’ll have to blow that whistle a little louder,” said O’Hara, with a tantalizing grin.

“What do you mean, sir?”

“Those chaps all left town last night; they must be about forty miles away; you see we explained matters to them; I don’t think, if I was you, I would feel bad about it; they believe they can get along better at Carville than at Bardstown.”

For the first time since the trouble began, Harvey Bradley lost his temper. To be defied and taunted in this manner was more than he could bear. He vowed over again that not one of the strikers should do another day’s work for him, even if he begged for it on his knees and he was starving. He at once telegraphed to Vining, fully one hundred miles away, where he knew there were many people idle, for one hundred men who would not only come, but stay. He preferred those who knew something about the business, but the first need was that the men would remain at their posts, and if necessary fight for their positions. He guaranteed larger wages than he had ever paid experienced hands, but he wanted no man who would not help hold the fort against all comers. The superintendent was on his mettle; he meant to win.

Having sent off this message, for which it cannot be denied, Harvey had every legal and moral warrant, he set out on a long tramp through the woods at the rear of Bardstown. It was a crisp autumn day, and the long brisk walk did him much good. The glow came to his cheeks, his blood was warmed, and his brain cleared by the invigorating exercise. So much indeed did he enjoy it that he kept it up until, to his surprise, he saw that it was growing dark, and he was several miles from home.

It was snowing, though not heavily. He walked fast, but, when night had fully come, paused with the uncomfortable discovery that he was hopelessly lost in the woods.

“Well, this is pleasant!” he exclaimed, looking around in vain for some landmark in the gloom. “I believe I shall have to spend the night out doors, though I seem to be following some sort of path.”

He struck a match, shading it with his hand from the chilly wind, and stooped down. Yes; there was an unmistakable trail, and with renewed hope he hurried on, taking care not to stray to either side. Within the next ten minutes, to his delight, he caught the twinkle of a star-like point of light among the trees, a short distance ahead.

While making his way hopefully forward, Harvey became aware of a singular fact. The air around him was tainted with a peculiar odor, such as he had never met before. It was of a rank nature, and, while not agreeable, could not be said to be really unpleasant. It might have interested him more, but for his anxiety to reach the shelter which was now so near at hand.

Arriving at the cabin, he found the latch-string hanging out. A sharp pull, the door was swung inward and Harvey stepped into a small room, lit up by a crackling wood-fire on the hearth.

As he entered, two men who were smoking their pipes, looked up. The visitor could not hide his expression of surprise, for they were Hugh O’Hara and Thomas Hansell, the last persons in the world he wished to see.

CHAPTER II.

A POINTED DISCUSSION.

Hugh O’Hara was in middle life. He was of Scotch descent, and, in his younger days, had received a fair education. Even now he spent much time over his books. He talked well, and was not without a certain grace of manner founded, no doubt, on his knowledge of human nature, which gave him great influence with others. It was this, as much as his skill, that made him the leading foreman at a time when a score of others had the right by seniority of service to the place.

But Hugh had dipped into the springs of learning just enough to have his ideas of right and wrong turned awry and to form a distaste for his lot that made his leadership dangerous. Besides, he had met with sorrows that deepened the shadows that lay across his pathway. In that little cabin he had seen a young wife close her eyes in death, and his only child, a sweet girl of five years, not long afterward was laid beside her mother. Many said that Hugh buried his heart with Jennie and had not been the same man since. He was reserved, except to one or two intimate friends. Shaggy, beetle-browed and unshaven, his looks were anything but pleasing to those who did not fully know him.

Tom Hansell was much the same kind of man, except that he lacked the book education of his companion and leader. He had strong impulses, and was ready to go to an extreme length in whatever direction he started, but he always needed a guiding spirit, and that he found in Hugh O’Hara.

The latter, after burying his child, moved into the village, saying that he never wanted to look again upon the cabin that had brought so much sorrow to him. Most people believed he could not be led to go near it, and yet on this blustery night he and Tom Hansell were seated in the structure without any companions except the well known hound Nero, and were smoking their pipes and plotting mischief.

Hugh and Tom were in their working clothes—coarse trousers, shirts, and heavy shoes, without vest or coat. Their flabby caps lay on the floor behind them, and their tousled hair hung over their foreheads almost to their eyes. Tom had no side whiskers, but a heavy mustache and chin whiskers, while the face of Hugh was covered with a spiky black beard that stood out from his face as if each hair was charged with electricity.

Nero, the hound, raised his nose from between his paws and looked up at the visitor. Then, as if satisfied, he lowered his head and resumed his nap.

Bradley, as I have said, was angry with himself for walking into such a trap. It was not fear, but a deep dislike of the man who was the head and front of the trouble at the mills. He was the spokesman and leader of the strikers, and he was the real cause of the stoppage of the works. Harvey looked upon him as insolent and brutal, and he was sure that no circumstances could arise that would permit him to do a stroke of work in the Rollo Mills again.

“Good evening,” said Harvey stiffly, “I did not expect to find you here.”

Hansell nodded in reply to the salutation, but Hugh simply motioned with the hand that held the pipe toward a low stool standing near the middle of the apartment.

“Help yourself to a seat, Mr. Bradley; the presence of Tom and myself here is no odder than is your own.”

“I suppose not,” replied Harvey with a half-laugh, as he seated himself; “I started out for a walk to-day and went too far—that is, so far that I lost my way. I had about made up my mind that I would have to sleep in the woods, when I caught the light from your window and made for it.”

The glance that passed between Hugh and Tom—sly as it was—did not elude the eye of Harvey Bradley. He saw that his explanation was not believed, but he did not care; there was no love between him and them, and, had it not looked as if he held them in fear, he would have turned and walked away after stepping across the threshold. As it was, he meant to withdraw as soon as he could do it without seeming to be afraid.

“Is this the first time you have taken a walk up this way?” asked Hugh.

“The fact that I lost my way ought to answer that question; how far is it, please, to Bardstown?”

“An even mile by the path you came.”

“But I didn’t come by any path, except for a short distance in front of this place.”

“Then how did you get here?”

“Is there no way of traveling through the woods except by the road that leads to your door?”

The conversation was between Harvey and Hugh alone. Tom was abashed in the presence of two such persons, and nothing could have led him to open his mouth unless appealed to by one or the other. Neither made any allusion to the strike. After the superintendent’s rebuff, Hugh scorned to do so, while Harvey would have stultified himself had he invited any discussion. The repugnance between the two men was too strong for them calmly to debate any question. Besides Hugh and Tom were suspicious; they did not believe that the presence of the superintendent was accidental; there was a sinister meaning in it which boded ill for Hugh and his friends, and the former, therefore, was in a vicious mood.

With the conditions named, a wrangle may be set down as one of the certainties. But Harvey Bradley had defied the fury of half a hundred men, and he meant to teach this marplot his proper place. There was a threatening gleam in his eye, but he puffed a few seconds at his pipe, and then, glaring through the rank smoke that curled upward from his face said:

“There are a good many ways by which Hugh O’Hara’s cabin can be found, but those who come on honest errands stick to the path.”

“Which explains why the path is so little worn,” was the reply of Harvey.

“Aye, and your feet have done mighty little to help the wearing of the same.”

“If those who live in the cabin were honest themselves, they would not tremble every time the latch-string is pulled, nor would they be scared if they saw a visitor stop to snuff the air in this neighborhood.”

This was an ill-timed remark, and Harvey regretted the words the moment they passed his lips. He saw Hugh and Tom glance at each other; but the words, having been spoken, could not be recalled, nor did the superintendent make any attempt to modify them. Before the others could answer, he added:

“I have heard it said that Hugh O’Hara held this place in such strong disfavor that nothing could lead him to spend a night here, yet he smokes his pipe and plots mischief as if the cabin is the one place in the world with which he is content.”

These words were not soothing in their effect, nor did the speaker mean that they should be. Hugh was insolent, and the superintendent resented it.

The only proof of the rising anger in the breast of O’Hara was the vigorous puffing of his pipe. Tom, as I have said, was too awed to say anything at all.

“I am of age and free born,” growled Hugh, looking into the glowing embers and speaking as if to himself; “where I go and what I do concerns no one but myself.”

“Not so long as you go to the proper place and do only what is right,” said Harvey, who, sitting back a few feet from the fire, looked calmly at the fellow whose rough profile was outlined against the fiery background behind him.

“Men interpret right according to their own ideas, and they seldom agree, but most people will pronounce that person the worst sort of knave who robs poor men of what they earn and looks upon them as he looks upon the beasts of the field—worth only the amount of money they bring to him.”

CHAPTER III.

MISSING.

The conversation was taking a dangerous shape. Harvey saw that it would not do for him to stay. Both these men were fierce enough to fly at his throat. That little cabin in the woods was liable to become the scene of a tragedy unless he bridled his tongue or went away.

Disdaining to say so much as "good-night," he rose to his feet, opened the door, shut it behind him, and walked out in the blustery darkness.

"I would rather spend the night fighting tigers than to keep the company of such miscreants. But the new hands will be here in a few days, and the fellows will be taught a lesson which they will remember all their lives. I suppose I ought to pity their dupes, but they should have enough sense to see that these men are their worst enemies. It will be a bright day for the Rollo Mills and for Bardstown when they are well rid of them."

The superintendent did not pause to think where he was going when he stepped into the open air. The cold wind struck his face and a few fine particles touched his cheek. The sky had partly cleared, so that he could see the fine coating of snow around him, but after all, very little had fallen.

"If I can keep the path," he thought, "I will reach the village, but that is no easy matter—ah! there it is again."

The peculiar odor that had mystified him before was in the air. He recalled that Hugh and Tom had made an allusion to it that he did not understand.

"It may come from their chimney and be caused by something burning; but I looked closely at the wood on the hearth and saw nothing else."

A natural impulse led him, after walking a few rods, to look behind him. He had heard nothing, but knowing the surly mood of the couple, he thought it probable they might follow him.

The door of the cabin, was drawn wide open and the form of a man stood out to view, as if stamped with ink on the flaming background made by the fire beyond. His lengthened shadow was thrown down the path almost to the feet of Harvey. The fellow no doubt was peering into the gloom and listening.

"I wonder whether they mean to dog me," said Harvey; "it will be an easy matter to do so, for they know every part of the wood, while I am a stranger. They are none too good to put me out of the way; it is such men who have no fear of the law, but they shall not take me unawares."

While still looking toward the cabin, all became dark again. The door was closed, but he could not be sure whether the man stood outside or within.

"If he means to do me harm he will soon be at my heels."

But the straining eyes could not catch the outlines of any one, and the only sound was the moaning wind among the bare branches.

“He has gone back into the house, but may come out again.”

And so, while picking his way through the dim forests, you may be sure that Harvey Bradley looked behind him many times. It makes one shiver with dread to suspect that a foe is softly following him. Harvey had buttoned his pea jacket to his chin and he now turned up the collar, so that it touched his ears. His hands were shoved deep into the side pockets and the right one rested upon his revolver that he had withdrawn from its usual place at his hip. He was on the alert for whatever might come.

He was pleased with one fact: the path to which so many references were made, was so clearly marked that he found it easy to avoid going wrong.

“If I had had sense enough to take the right course when I first struck it, I would have been home by this time.”

After turning around several times without seeing or hearing anything suspicious, he came to believe that however glad O’Hara and Hansell might be to do him harm, they lacked the courage, unless almost sure against detection.

“Hugh will stir up others to go forward, but he will take good care to protect himself.”

The dull roar that he once fancied he heard when tramping aimlessly during the day, was now so distinct that he knew he must be near a stream. The path crossed it at no great distance.

Sure enough, he had only turned a bend and gone down a little slope when he reached the margin of a deep creek, fully twenty feet wide. It flowed smooth and dark at his feet, but the turmoil to the left showed that it tumbled over the rocks, not far away.

Harvey was anything but pleased, when he saw the bridge by which the stream had to be passed. It was merely the trunk of a tree, that lay with the base on the side where he stood, while the top rested on the other bank. Whoever had felled the tree had trimmed the trunk of its branches from base to top—the result being more ornamental than useful, for the protuberances would have served to help the footing of a passenger. The trunk in the middle was no more than six inches in diameter, and being a little worn by the shoes that had trod its length, the footing was anything but secure. With the sprinkling of snow it was more treacherous than ever.

“Must I cross *that*?” Harvey said aloud, with a feeling akin to dismay.

“You can do so or swim, whichever you choose.”

These words were spoken by a man standing on the other side, and who was about to step on the support, when he paused on seeing another on the point of doing the same from the opposite bank. In the dim light, Harvey saw him only indistinctly, but judged that he himself was recognized by the other.

“I suppose it’s safe enough for those accustomed to it,” said Harvey in reply, "but I prefer some other means; do you intend to use it?"

"That I do; I want no better; if you are afraid, get out of the way, for I am late."

Harvey moved to the right, and watched the other, who stepped upon the support and walked over with as much certainty as if treading a pavement on the street.

Harvey looked closely, and as the fellow came toward him, he recognized him as one of his former employes. He was Jack Hansell—a brother of Tom, and like him a close associate of Hugh O'Hara, the leader.

"You are out late, Jack," remarked the superintendent, as the other left the log. To his surprise, Jack did not answer, but quickly disappeared up the path by which the superintendent had reached the spot.

"He is surly and ill-mannered, like all of them; no doubt he is on his way to the cabin to plot mischief with the others."

Since nothing was to be gained by waiting, Harvey now stepped on the trunk and began gingerly making his way across. It was a hard task, and just beyond the middle, he lost his balance. He was so far along, however, that a vigorous jump landed him on the other bank.

A little beyond he caught the twinkling lights of the village, and he hastened his steps, now that, as it may be said, home was in sight. He felt as if he was famishing, and the thought of the luscious supper awaiting his return, gave him such speed that he was soon at his own door.

Though it was late, he saw his aunt was astir, for the lights were burning brightly. Before he could utter the greeting on his tongue, he was terrified by the scared face of his relative.

"Why, aunt, what is the matter? Are you ill?"

"Oh, Harvey!" she wailed; "haven't you brought Dollie with you?"

"Dollie!" repeated the other; "I haven't seen her since I left home."

"Then you will never see her again," and, overcome by her terrible grief, the good woman sank into the nearest chair, covered her face with her apron and wept.

Harvey Bradley stood petrified. Bright-eyed Dollie, whom he had left a few hours before, rosy, happy, overflowing with bounding spirits, was gone, and the sobbing Aunt Maria declared she would never be seen again.

Stepping into the room, Harvey laid his hand on his aunt's shoulder and in a trembling voice said:

"Why, aunt, what does this mean? Are you in earnest? What has become of Dollie? Tell me, I beseech you."

"She is lost; she is lost! Oh, why did we ever bring her to this dreadful country? I wish none of us had ever seen it."

"But what about Dollie? Where is she? How long has she been gone?

Compose yourself and tell.”

It was not until he spoke sharply that the hysterical woman was able to make known that the child had been absent for hours, no one knew where. When she learned that noon that her big brother would not be back till night, Dollie had pouted because he had gone off without telling her. She was not sure she could ever forgive him. However, she ate her dinner, and soon after went out to play. Some hours later her aunt went to the door to call her, but she was not within sight or hearing. Maggie was sent to look for her, but soon came back with word that she could not be found.

The child had been seen a couple of hours before, running in the direction of the path that led into the mountains, as if she was fleeing from some one, Maggie had gone as far as she dared in quest of her, but her loudest shouts brought no reply and she returned.

The word brought by the servant, as may well be believed, filled the aunt with the wildest grief. Beyond all doubt, Dollie had formed a sudden resolve to hunt up her brother Harvey, who had gone away and left her at home. She had strayed so far into the mountains that she was lost. Fortunately, she was warmly dressed at the time, but exposed as she must be to the wintry winds and cold, she could not hold out until morning unless rescued very soon.

Harvey was stricken with an anguish such as he had never known before, but he knew that not a minute was to be lost. Dollie must be found at once or it would be too late. It added a poignancy to his woe to know that in coming down the mountain path, he must have passed close to her, who was in sore need of the help he was eager to give.

“Have you made no search for her?” he asked.

“I could not believe she would not come back until it began to grow dark. I thought she could not be far away; Maggie and I hunted through the village, inquiring of every one whom we saw; many of the people were kind, and two or three have gone to hunt for her; I started to do so, but did not go far, when I was sure she had come back while I was away, and I hurried home only to find she was not here.”

“Are you sure any one is looking for her?”

“There are several.”

“Well,” said Harvey, impatient with the vacillation shown by his aunt, “I shall not come back until she is found.”

His hand was on the knob of the door when his distressed relative sprang to her feet.

“Harvey;” she said in a wild, scared manner, “shall I tell you what I believe?”

“Of course.”

“Dollie did not lose herself: some of those awful men did it.”

“Do you mean the strikers?”

“Yes; they have taken her away to spite you.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed the young man, passing out the door and striding up the single street that ran through the village.

But though unwilling to confess it to himself, the same shocking suspicion had come to him at the moment he learned that Dollie was lost. Could it be that some of the men, grown desperate in their resentment, had taken this means of mortally injuring him? Was there any person in the wide world who would harm an innocent child for the sake of hurting a strong man? Alas, such things had been done, and why should they not be done again? The words that he overheard between Hugh O’Hara and Tom Hansell proved them capable of dark deeds. Could it be that some of the hints thrown out by them during that brief interview in the cabin bore any relation to the disappearance of Dollie.

At the moment Harvey turned away from his own house it was his intention to rouse the village and to ask all to join in the hunt for the child, but a feeling of bitter resentment led him to change his purpose. No; they would rejoice over his sorrow; they would give him no aid, and, if they had had a hand in her taking off, they would do what they could to baffle him in his search. Slight as was his hope, he would push on alone.

“O’Hara and Hansell know all about it; I will search the neighborhood of the path all the way to their cabin and then compel them to tell what they know; if they refuse——”

He shut his lips tight and walked faster than ever. He strove to fight back the tempestuous emotions that set his blood boiling. He was moved by a resolve that would stop at nothing; he would not believe that there was no hope; he knew he could force the miscreants to give up their secret, and had a hair of his little sister’s head been harmed the punishment should be swift and terrible.

“When Dollie is found,” he muttered, determined to believe she must be restored to him, “I will send her and Aunt Maria away, and then have it out with these fellows; I’ll make them rue the day they began the fight.”

These were dreadful thoughts, but there was excuse for them, his grief made him half frantic.

The path over which he believed Dollie had either strayed or been led or carried, entered the woods about a hundred yards from the village and gradually sloped and wound upward for a mile, when it passed the door of Hugh O’Hara’s cabin and lost itself in the solitude beyond.

The sky had cleared still more during the interval since he came down the mountain side, and he could not only see the course clearly, but could distinguish objects several rods away, when the shadow of the overhanging trees did not shut out the light. But the season was so far along that few leaves were left on the limbs and it was easy, therefore, for him to keep the right course.

He had not gone far when he stopped and shouted the name of Dollie. The sound reached a long way, and he repeated the call several times, but only the dismal wind among the limbs gave answer.

Striding forward, he stood a few minutes later on the margin of the creek that was spanned by the fallen tree.

“She would not have dared to walk over,” was his thought: “she must have been on this side, if she wandered off alone.”

A moment later he added:

“No; for the very reason that it is dangerous, Dollie would run across; it would be no trouble for her to do so, and there is just enough peril to tempt her. Could she have fallen in?”

He looked at the dark water as it swept forward and shivered.

“Rivers and lakes and seas and streams are always thirsting for human life, and this may have seized her.”

Tramping through the undergrowth that lined the bank he fought his way onward until he stood beside the rocks where the waters made a foaming cascade, as they dashed downward toward the mills far away.

“If she did fall in, she must be somewhere near this spot——”

His heart seemed to stop beating. Surely that dark object, half submerged and lying against the edge of the bank, where the water made an eddy, must be her body. He ran thither and stooped down.

“Thank God,” was his exclamation, after touching it with his hands, and finding it a piece of dark wood that had been carried there from the regions above.

Back he came to where the fallen tree spanned the creek, and hurried across. No snow was falling, but the earth was white with the thin coating that had filtered down hours before.

“Had it come earlier in the day,” he thought, “it would help us to trace her, but now it will hide her footprints.”

Hardly a score of steps from the creek his foot struck something soft, and he stooped down. Straightening up, he held a small hood in his hand, such as children wear in cold weather. Faint as was the light, he recognized it as Dollie’s; he had seen her wear it many times.

“What can it mean?” he asked himself; “I must have stepped over or on that on my way down, but did not notice it. Yes, Dollie is on this side the stream, but where?”

Aye, that was the question. Once more he raised his voice and shouted with might and main, but as before no answer came back.

Harvey was now master of himself. He had recovered from the shock that at first almost took away his senses and he was able to think and act with his usual coolness. But with this, the belief that Hugh and Tom had something to do with the disappearance of Dollie grew until at times he was without any doubt at all. Occasionally, however, he wavered in his belief.

Thus it was that two theories offered themselves. The first was that Dollie had set out to find him and had wandered up the mountain path to some point above the bridge and then had strayed from it and become lost. Worn out, she had laid down and was at that moment asleep.

The corollary of this theory was that she had perished with cold, or would thus perish before daylight. True, she was well clad when she went out that afternoon to play, but her hood was gone and she could not escape the biting wind that pierced the heavy clothing of Harvey himself. Then, too, there was the danger from the wild beasts, of which he had had too late an experience to forget.

Should it prove that Dollie went off in the manner named, then Harvey made a great error in setting out alone to search for her. He ought to have roused the village, and, with the hundreds scouring the mountains, helped by torches and dogs, discovery could not be delayed long.

The other and darker theory was that she had been seen by some of his enemies as she went into the woods and had been coaxed to some out-of-the-way place, where her abductors meant to hold and use her as a means of bringing the superintendent to terms. All must have known that no method could be so effective as that.

It was hard to believe that the evil-minded men would go any further. Yet it was easy for them to do so; they could make way with a little child like her and have it seem that her death was caused by falling over the rocks or by some other accident that might easily come to her.

“O’Hara and Hansell must have known all about it when I was in their cabin. They were afraid to assail me in the cabin, for I was prepared, and the fear of the law kept them from following me after I left their place.”

Harvey was thinking hard when he caught the well-known light, among the trees in the cabin.

“He, Tom and Jack, precious scamps all of them, are exulting over the sorrow they have caused, but they shall pay for it.”

The latch-string had not yet been withdrawn. Harvey gave it a jerk, followed by a spiteful push that threw the door wide open. Disappointment awaited him. Neither Hugh nor Tom was there, but Jack, looking like a twin brother of Tom, was in the act of lighting the pipe that his relative had probably left for his use. He was alone, not even the hound being present.

Jack had partly risen to his feet to reach the pouch of tobacco on the short mantel above the fireplace. He paused and looked over his shoulder with a startled expression at the visitor who made such an emphatic entrance.

“Why—why, Mr. Bradley,” he stammered, “I didn’t know it was you; will you take a seat?”

“Where are Hugh and Tom?”

“They went out some time ago.”

“Where did they go?” demanded Harvey in an angry voice.

“Down to—the—that is, I don’t know.”

“Yes, you do know. I want no trifling; I will not stand it.”

The fellow, though flustered at first, quickly regained his self-possession. He had evidently checked himself just in time to keep back some important knowledge.

“Where have they gone?” repeated the superintendent, bursting with impatience.

But Jack Hansell was himself again—sullen and insolent as ever. He had an intense dislike of his employer—a dislike that had deepened within the past few days. He slowly sat down and smoked a full minute before making reply to Harvey, who felt like throttling him.

“I told you I didn’t know,” he finally said, looking into the embers and speaking as if to the glowing coals.

“But you do know.”

“So I do, but I know another thing as well, and that is that there ain’t any reason why I should tell you if I don’t choose to.”

It took a great effort of the will for Harvey to hold himself from doing violence to the man who said he was not bound to tell what he preferred to keep to himself: but the superintendent saw that nothing could be gained by violence. The man who can keep cool during a dispute has ten-fold the advantage over one who does not restrain himself.

After all, Jack Hansell was of small account. It was O’Hara, his master, and mayhap his companion, whom Harvey Bradley must see. If Tom chose to tell the truth he could do so, but if he would not, no one could force him to say the words.

All this was clear to the young man, who, checking his anger, added in a lower tone:

“You are not bound to answer any question I ask you, even when you have no reason for your refusal, but you cannot decline to say when they are likely to be back.”

“Yes, I can, for I don’t know.”

“I wish to see O’Hara on a matter of the first importance.”

“But he may not want to see you, and I ain’t the man to make things unpleasant for a friend.”

“You certainly expect them back to-night, do you not?”

Jack smoked his pipe a few seconds before giving heed to this simple question. Then, turning slowly toward Harvey, who was still standing in the middle of the room, he said:

“You had better sit down, for you won’t find Hugh and Tom any sooner by keeping your feet. What do you want to see ’em for?”

“That I can explain only to them, though it is Hugh whom I particularly want to meet.”

The superintendent took the seat to which he was invited. It was the stool on which he sat when in the cabin before. It cost him a greater effort than can be explained to defer to this defiant fellow, who a few weeks or even days before would have cringed at his feet like a dog.

“That being the case,” added Jack, between the puffs at his pipe, “why you’ll have to wait till they come back. That may be inside of five minutes, and not for an hour; maybe,” added Jack in the game exasperating manner, “that nothing will be seen of ’em till daylight. You see that since they have been cheated out of their work they have plenty of time to loaf through the country.”

“Any man who is too lazy to work can find time to turn his hand to dishonest tricks,” said the superintendent, meaning that the words should not be misunderstood.

“Sometimes the tricks that you call dishonest pay better than working for a superintendent who wants all the wages himself,” was the impudent reply of Jack Hansell.

“That is the excuse of the man who is bad at heart and who prefers wrong to right. Our state prisons are full of that sort of people.”

“Yes—and there are a good many people that ought to be in prison that ain’t there.”

“I am sure no one is better qualified than you to speak on that matter.”

“Except yourself.”

It struck Harvey just then that he was doing an unworthy thing in holding such a conversation with any man. If he had anything of the kind to say, he ought to speak it openly. He now did so.

“There is not a particle of doubt, Jack Hansell, that you and your brother and Hugh O’Hara are engaged in business that ought to place you all behind the bars.”

“If you think it safe to talk that way before Tom and Hugh you will now have the chance.”

“I will be glad to tell them to their faces what I have told you.”

“All right; there they come.”

Footsteps and voices in such low tones were heard outside that it was clear the men brought important news with them. And such indeed proved to be the case.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEARCH BY HUGH AND TOM.

Never did one person do another a greater injustice than did Harvey Bradley when he believed that either Hugh O’Hara or any one else had aught to do with the absence of his little sister Dollie. No men had a hand in the sad business, nor could any one have been led to harm a hair of her head. Had Harvey asked for help, no one in the village would have held back from doing all that could be done to restore the child to her friends.

The first news that came to Hugh O’Hara’s cabin of the loss of the child was brought by Jack Hansell, who went thither on a far different errand. After a long talk on business, he gave the tidings, adding:

“I met him at the creek, but thought I wouldn’t tell him, for it would do no good. I kept my eyes open for the gal, but seen nothing of her.”

Hugh jerked the pipe from his mouth.

“What’s that you are saying? The little girl lost?”

“That’s it; she’s been missing since noon; they think she come up the path and got lost in the mountains.”

“Good gracious!” gasped Hugh, starting to his feet, “that is bad; do you know,” he added, turning to Tom and speaking with a slight tremor, “that that little girl Dollie is about the age my Jennie was when she died?”

“I hadn’t thought of that,” replied Tom.

“And,” continued Hugh, swallowing a lump in his throat, “she looks so much like Jennie that I’ve often felt as if I would give all I have—which ain’t much—to hold the little one on my knee as I used to hold my baby. She is a sweet child and likes me; we’ve had many a talk together that no one beside us knows about. She’s so gentle, so innocent, so good that it seems to me I see my own darling before me when she looks up in my face. Come, boys,” he added, decisively, as he walked to the farther end of the room, picked up a lantern and lit the candle inside.

“Come where?” asked Tom, in amazement.

Hugh turned half angrily toward him.

“Do you think that I could rest while that child is lost in the mountains? Mr. Bradley hasn’t acted right toward us and I bear him no good will, but this isn’t *he*—it’s a little child—she looks and acts like my Jennie, that’s dead and gone.”

“But, Hugh, you forget—what about the place?”

“Let it go to the dogs for all I care! What does it amount to against the life of the little one? But we’ll let Jack stay; if any of the boys come, send them out to help in the hunt; it’ll do them more good than to break the law.”

“Suppose some that are strangers come?” said Jack with a grin.

Hugh O’Hara gave a hollow laugh.

“Send them out, too, to help in the search; we’ll be sure to find her when the whole country gets to work. If I was down in the village I would have every man, woman and child in the woods, and wouldn’t let them eat or drink or sleep till she’s found. Tom, there’s no one that knows the woods better than we and Nero. Let’s be off!”

The door was drawn inward, and Jack Hansell was left alone. He lit his pipe, smoked it out, refilled it and was in the act of refilling it, when Harvey Bradley came in—as has been made known in another place. While the man sat smoking and alone in the cabin, he fell to brooding over the troubles at the mills. Thus it came to pass that his feelings were so bitter at the time the superintendent entered that he kept back every hint that the absent men were engaged in the most “honest” business in the world—that is, they were looking for the missing child.

Meanwhile Hugh and Tom went at the task not only with zeal, but with a sagacity that gave promise of good results. As Hugh had said, they knew every foot of the mountains for miles, they were free from the flurry that at first ran away with the judgment of the superintendent, and they were used to prowling through the woods. Still further Nero had been trained to follow the faintest footprints.

“Now, Tom,” said the leader, when they had walked a short ways, “we can’t do anything till we get on the trail of the little one.”

“What do you think has become of her?”

“She’s somewhere in the woods asleep or dead, with the chances about even for either.”

“Jack says she was seen coming up the mountain path early this afternoon.”

“Well, she has kept to it till she has either slipped out of the path without knowing it or she has done it on purpose. She has strolled along until it became dark or she was tired. Then she has lain down on the leaves and gone to sleep. Nero, find the trail of the little girl.”

“But,” said Tom, “the night is so cold.”

“So it is, but if the girl went out to play she was well clad, and, if she knew enough, she has crept under the lee of a rock or into the bushes, where the wind can’t reach her. If she did the same, she hasn’t frozen to death.”

“But there are wild animals in these parts.”

“I know that, and she would make a meal that any of them would be glad to get; we can only hope they didn’t find her.”

Just then Nero, who had been nosing the path in front, uttered a whine and turned aside. Hugh held up the lantern and saw that he had gone to the right. He was following a trail of some kind; whether it was that of the one whom they were seeking was to be learned. It would take a fine scent to trace the tiny footsteps under the carpet of snow, but such an exploit is not one-tenth as wonderful as that of the trained dogs in Georgia, which will stick to the track of a convict when it has been trampled upon by hundreds of others wearing similar dress and shoes, and will keep to it for miles by running parallel to the trail and at a distance of a hundred feet.

But in the latter case the canines have an advantage at the start; they are put upon the track or directed to hunt for it where it is known to exist; they are given a clew in some form.

The hound Nero was skilful in taking a scent, but his ability was not to be compared to that of the dogs to which I have referred, nor indeed was it necessary that it should be. But he had great intelligence, and acted as if he understood every word said to him by his master. He had saved Hugh and his friends many a time by giving warning from afar of the approach of strange parties. It may seem incredible that he should know what was wanted of him, but there is the best reason for saying he understood it all. Having no part of the little one’s clothing to help, he was without the clew which would appear to be indispensable. His master, however, was satisfied the dog had struck the right trail.

“Stick to it, Nero,” said Hugh, encouragingly, “not too fast, but be sure you’re right.”

Without pause, the two followed the dog, Hugh in front with lantern in hand. The woods were so cluttered with undergrowth that they could not go fast, seeing which Nero suited his pace to theirs. Now and then he ran ahead, as if impatient with the slow progress of the couple, and then he calmly awaited their approach.

“Hark!”

The single word “*Dollie*!” rang through the arches of the woods. They recognized the voice as that of the superintendent, who was hurrying over the path they had left, and who was not far away. In fact, Hugh held the lantern in front of him so as to hide its rays.

“I am sorry for him,” he said, “but we don’t want him with us.”

“It cannot be,” remarked Tom, after they had struggled further, “that she has gone as far as this; Nero must be off the track.”

At this moment the dog emitted a low, baying whine that would have startled any one had he not known its meaning. It was the signal which the remarkable animal always gave when close to the end of a trail.

“We shall soon know the worst,” said Hugh, crashing through the wood with such haste that Tom had to hurry almost into a trot to save himself from dropping behind.

The singular call of the dog was heard again. He wanted his friends to move faster. It came from a point slightly to the left.

“Here he is!” exclaimed Hugh, making a sharp turn and showing more excitement than at any time during the evening.

“I see him! There he stands!” added Tom, stumbling forward.

With his right hand Hugh raised the lantern above his head, so that its glare was taken from their eyes. The hound was close to a rock that rose some six or eight feet above the ground, and his nose was pointed toward the base of the black mass. At the same moment the men saw something dark and light mixed together, like a bundle of clothing. One bound and Hugh was on his knees, the lamp held even with his forehead while he peered downward and softly drew the clothing aside. Tom was also stooping low and leaning forward with bated breath.

There lay little Dollie Bradley, sleeping as sweetly as if nestling beside her big brother in the warm bed at home. She must have wandered through the woods until, worn out, she reached this spot. Then she had thrown herself on the earth beside the rock and had fallen asleep. Having lost her hood, her head was without any covering, except her own native hair, which was abundant. Besides, rugged people do not need to cover their heads while asleep, even in cold weather.

It was fortunate for Dollie that she was so warmly wrapped. One arm was doubled under her head, and the cheek that rested on it was pushed just enough out of shape to add to her picturesqueness. Her heavy coat having been buttoned around her body, kept its form and could not have been better arranged. The chubby legs were covered by thick stockings, and the feet were protected by heavy shoes. True, she ran much risk in lying upon the cold earth, with nothing between her and the ground, but there was hope that no serious harm would follow.

The rock not only kept off the wind, but screened her from the snow. It was almost certain that the little one had been asleep several hours.

Hugh gently examined the limbs and body to see whether there was any hurt. Her peaceful sleep ought to have satisfied him, but he was not content. Not a scratch, however, was found, though her clothing had suffered a good deal.

“Take the lantern,” said he in a husky voice to his companion. Then, softly pushing his brawny arms under the dimpled form, he lifted it as tenderly as its mother could have done. Tom smoothed the clothing so as to cover the body as fully as possible. Hugh doffed his coarse cap and covered the mass of silken tresses that streamed over his shoulder.

Dollie muttered as a child will do when disturbed in its slumber, but, fitting her head to the changed position, she slept on as sweetly as ever.

“Now lead the way,” added Hugh, “and be careful where you step.”

Tom was only too glad to do his part. Nero, as happy as the others, walked in advance, in his dignified manner, now and then wagging his tail and whining with delight. None knew better than he the noble work he had done.

Tom used great care. When the bushes could not be avoided, Hugh shoved them aside with one hand, that they might not brush against the face resting so close to his own. Perhaps he held the velvety cheek nearer his shaggy beard than was needed, but who can chide him when his heart glowed with the sorrowful pleasure that came from the fancy that his own Jennie, whom he had so often pressed to his breast, was resting there again?

A tear dropped on the cheek of the little one. In that hour new resolves entered the heart of O’Hara. He had been sullen, discontented, and had long led a life that grieved his conscience.

By and by when they came back to the path they found the walking easier than before.

“Hugh,” said Tom, stopping short and facing about, “ain’t you tired of carryin’ the kid? ’cause if you are, I’m ready to give you a lift.”

“No; I wish I could carry her forever!”

All too soon the glimmer from the cabin window fell upon them, and they paused at the door to make sure the clothing of the child was arranged. They acted as if they were getting ready to go into the presence of company.

“I don’t know as I’ve done right in not carrying her home,” said Hugh, “but she has been out too long already in the night air; we’ll take her in and keep her while you run down to the village and let the folks know she is safe.”

“Is she still asleep?”

“Yes, hark! some of the boys seem to be inside,” added Hugh, as the sound of voices came to them from within.

The door was pushed open and the two men and dog entered.

Harvey Bradley had risen to his feet, and for one second he stared angrily at the newcomers. You will recall that hot words had just passed between him and Jack Hansell, and both were in an ugly mood. Then Harvey quickly recognized the form in the arms of Hugh and rushed forward.

“Is she alive?”

“Aye, alive and without a scratch,” replied Hugh, deftly taking the hat from the head of the little sleeper and placing her in the outstretched arms.

“How thankful I am,” exclaimed Harvey, kissing the cold red cheeks over and over again, and pressing her to his heart; “yes—she is well—she was lost and is found—she was dead and is alive again.”

“What are you laughing at?” demanded Hugh, wiping his eyes and glaring savagely at Jack Hansell, who, with open mouth, was looking on in a bewildered way; “haven’t you manners enough to know when gentlemen are present?”

Jack seemed to think that the only way to behave was by keeping his mouth closed. He shut his jaws with a click like that of a steel trap and never said a word.

Harvey Bradley sat down on the stool from which he had arisen, first drawing it closer to the fire, and unfastened the outer clothing of the little one. He saw that all was well with her. Then he looked up with moistened eyes and said in a tremulous voice:

“Hugh, tell me all about it.”

The short story was soon told. The hardy fellow made light of what he had done, but the superintendent, who kept his eyes fixed on his face, saw the sparkle of tears that the speaker could not keep back. It was hard for any one of the three to believe that only a brief while before they were ready to fly at each other's throats. Harvey was melted not only by the rescue of his sister, but by the remembrance of the dreadful injustice done Hugh O'Hara and his friends, when he allowed himself to think they had taken part in the disappearance of Dollie, who, through all the talk, continued sleeping.

"I can never thank you for what you have done," said the superintendent, hardly able to master his emotion, "but I shall show you that the charge of ingratitude can never be laid at my door."

"That's all right," replied Hugh, in his off-hand fashion; "Tom and I are glad to do a turn like that; nobody could want to see any harm come to such a child, no matter how they might feel toward others related to her. Do you mean to take her home to-night?"

"Yes; her aunt is frantic with grief."

"But Tom can run down there quicker than you can with the little one."

"No doubt, but we shall feel better to have her with us. She seems to be well, and we can bundle her up warmly. There may, after all, be serious results from this exposure, and it is best that we should have her where we can give her every care."

And drawing the hood from his pocket he fixed it upon Dollie's head. She opened her eyes for a moment and mumbled something, but sank into sleep again. Harvey explained how it was he came to have the headgear with him.

"I have a favor to ask of you, Mr. Bradley," said O'Hara, shifting from one foot to another and as confused as a school-boy.

"Anything that you ask shall be granted, if it be in my power to grant it," replied Harvey with a fervor that could leave no doubt of his sincerity.

"It's a long distance to the village, and I will be glad if you will let me carry her."

He made as if he simply wished to assist the superintendent. The latter knew better, but he did not say so.

"I shall be glad to have your aid; you have had a rest for several days, and a little exercise like this won't hurt you."

Hugh brought forth his best coat and gathered it around Dollie, as if he was tucking her up in her trundle bed. Then Harvey placed her with much care in his arms and made sure they were fully prepared to go out doors.

The Hansell brothers quietly looked on during these proceedings. They felt that there was no special use for them, and therefore they kept in the background. The hound Nero showed much interest. He walked around Hugh and Harvey, whining and wagging his tail as if he thought his views ought to have some weight in the questions the couple were called upon to consider.

"Come, Nero," said his master, as he drew the door inward. The dog shot through like a flash and the tramp to the village was begun.

Hardly a word was spoken on the way, but when the house was reached Hugh handed his burden over to Harvey and, refusing to go in, started to move off. The superintendent put out his free hand.

“Hugh, I want you to come and see me to-morrow afternoon; will you do so?”

“I will. Good-night.”

“Good-night.”

Hugh O’Hara had walked but a short distance up the mountain path when he was caught in a driving snow-storm. He cared little for it, however, and reached the cabin in due time, there to perform a strange duty.

CHAPTER V.

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM.

When Hugh O’Hara came to the door of Harvey Bradley, he was in his best dress—the same that he wore to church on Sundays. Aunt Maria met him on the threshold, and, in tremulous tones, thanked him. Then she led the way to the back parlor, where the young superintendent awaited him. The moment he entered, there came a flash of sunshine and a merry exclamation, and with one bound, little Dollie (none the worse, apparently, for her adventure the night before) landed in the iron-like arms and kissed the shaggy-bearded fellow, who laughingly took a chair and held her a willing captive on his knee.

Harvey sat smiling and silent until the earthquake was over. Then, as his chief foreman looked toward him, he said:

“As I said last night, Hugh, the service you have done is beyond payment. You know what a storm set in just after Dollie was brought home, she never could have lived through that.”

“It would have gone hard with her, I’m afraid,” replied the embarrassed visitor; “does the little one feel no harm?”

“We observe nothing except a slight cold, which the doctor says is of no account. I have made up my mind to give to you, Hugh——”

The latter raised his hand in protest. He could accept money for any service except that of befriending the blue-eyed darling on his knee.

“Never refer to that again.”

Harvey laughed.

“I looked for something of the kind; I have a few words to add. I found out this morning that there was a mortgage of $600 against your little home in the village. I don’t believe in mortgages, and that particular one has now no existence. If you see any way to help undo what I have done go ahead, but I beg you not to refuse another small present that I have prepared for you.”

And Harvey turned as if about to take something from his desk, but stopped when he saw Hugh shake his head almost angrily.

“I would do a good deal to oblige you, Mr. Bradley, but you must not ask that. I would have been better pleased had you let the mortgage alone; my wife and little one are under the sod, and it matters nought to me whether I have a place to lay my head. But,” he added with a faint smile, “what’s done can’t be undone, and, since you have asked me, I will drop the matter, but nothing more, I pray you, on the other subject.”

“Hugh,” said the superintendent, like one who braces himself for a duty that has its disagreeable as well as its pleasant features, “you know that I had sent to Vining for men to take the places of those who are on strike?”

“I heard something of the kind, sir.”

“They were to start for Bardstown to-night and are due to-morrow.”

“Yes, sir.”

“I countermanded the order by telegraph this morning; not a man will come.”

“Yes, sir.”

“The whistle will blow to-morrow as usual, ten minutes before 7 o’clock, and I shall expect every one of you to be in place; I have agreed to your terms.”

Hugh looked at the superintendent a moment and then asked a singular question:

“Is it because I found Dollie that you agree to our terms?”

“Why do you ask that?”

“Because, if that is the reason, I will not accept the terms, for you would be doing out of gratitude an act which your judgment condemned.”

Harvey Bradley felt his respect for this man increase tenfold. Such manliness was worthy of all admiration. He hastened to add:

“There’s where, I am glad to say, you are in error. Now you know as well as I do that in order to keep discipline the employer must insist upon his rights. If he were to give all that is asked his business would be destroyed. But, on the other hand, labor has rights as well as capital, and the two can never get along together until this truth is respected by both. In all disputes, there should be an interchange of views, a full statement of grievances by those who are dissatisfied, and a fair consideration of them by the party against whom they exist.”

O’Hara was not afraid to look his employer in the face and say:

“That has been my opinion all along, Mr. Bradley, and had it been yours this lock-out would never have come.”

“I admit it. You came to me from the employes and asked for a discussion of the differences between us. I thought you insolent, and refused to listen to you. Therein I did you all an injustice, for which I apologize.”

“It gives me joy to hear you speak thus, Mr. Bradley.”

“Seeing now my mistake, there is but the one course before me. I am convinced that in all cases of trouble like ours the court of first resort should be arbitration. The wish to be just is natural to every one, or at least to the majority of mankind. If the parties concerned cannot agree, they should appeal to those in whom both have confidence to bring about an agreement between them; that is according to the golden rule. Employer and employed, labor and capital, should be friends, and arbitration is the agent that shall bring about that happy state of things.”

“But I do not see that there has been any arbitration in this dispute.”

“But there has been all the same.”

“Where is the arbitrator?”

“She sits on your knee wondering what all this talk means. I tell you, Hugh, there is a good deal more in those little heads than most people think. Yesterday morning, when Dollie sat in her high chair at the breakfast-table, she heard her aunt and me talking about the strike. Though she could not understand it all, she knew there was trouble between me and my employes. I was out of patience and used some sharp words. She listened for a few minutes while busy with her bread and milk, and then what do you think she said?”

“I am sure I have no idea,” replied O’Hara, patting the head of the laughing child, “but whatever it was, it was something nice.”

“She says, ‘Brother Harvey, when I do anything wrong, you take me on your knee and talk to me and that makes me feel so bad that I never do that kind of wrong again. Why don’t you take those bad men on your knee and talk to them, so they won’t do so again?’ I showed her that such an arrangement was hardly practicable, and then she fired her solid shot that pierced my ship between wind and water: ‘Brother Harvey, maybe it’s *you* that has done wrong; why don’t you sit down on their knees *and let them give you a talking to*? Then you won’t be bad any more.”

Hugh and Harvey broke into laughter, during which Dollie, who had become tired of sitting still full two minutes, slid off O’Hara’s knee and ran out of the room.

“We smile at the odd conceits of the little ones,” continued Harvey, “but you know that the truest wisdom has come from the mouths of babes. I hushed her, but what she said set me thinking—‘*Why don’t you let them give you a good talking to?’ That* was the very thing you had asked and I had refused. I set out to take a long walk, and was absent most of the day. Her question kept coming up to me, and I tried to drive it away. The effort made me angry and ended in a decision to be sterner than ever. I would not yield a point; I would import a body of men at large expense and keep them at work, just because I was too proud to undo what I knew was wrong.

“Still my conscience troubled me, but for all that I don’t think I would have yielded. Pride, the greatest of all stumbling-blocks, was in my way. Reaching home, I learned that Dollie was lost; then, of course, every other thought went from my head. Nothing else could be done until she was found.”

Harvey was about to tell his guest his suspicion that he had had a hand in the abduction of the child, but he was ashamed, and really there was no call for such a confession.

“Well, it was you who found her. I repeat that my debt to you can never be paid. And yet I do not believe that that obligation would have led me to yield, where I felt that a principle was at stake. It was the words of Dollie, spoken yesterday, that stuck to me. They kept me awake most of the night and played a part in the dreams that I had about her being lost in the woods and eaten up by panthers and all sorts of creatures. When I awoke this morning, the mists had cleared away. I saw my error, and fully made up my mind to do all I could to correct it. I went to the telegraph office before breakfast and sent a message to Vining countermanding the order for the men. Then I came back and had just finished my meal when a message was brought to my house. Odd, wasn’t it?”

“I see nothing odd in a telegram for you.”

“I mean in the telegram itself.”

“I could not answer that unless I saw it.”

“Of course,” said Harvey with a laugh, wheeling about in his chair and picking up one of the yellow slips of paper which the Western Union furnishes its patrons gratis.

“There, read *that*,” he added, passing it to Hugh O’Hara, who looked at it with no little curiosity.

It was dated in the city of New York and signed by Johnson W. Bradley, father of Harvey, and President of the Rollo Mills Company. This was the body of the telegram:

“Don’t lose sight of the interests of your men. Before hiring other hands *try arbitration*.”

“That *is* rather odd,” said Hugh; leaning forward, so as to hand the telegram back to his employer, “but it is sound wisdom all the same.”

“Undoubtedly; but are you convinced that I agree to your terms not because of gratitude, but because I believe them right?”

“I am satisfied,” said Hugh; “have you sent the notice to the hands?”

“Yes. I wonder that you did not hear of it on the way here.”

Hugh smiled.

“Of course I heard of it. I knew it long ago, but I did not know *why* you had decided to restore our time to what it was and to pay the same wages; *that* I have learned from yourself. And now that you have done your part so well,” added Hugh, rising to leave, “I assure you that we shall do ours; we shall give you the best service we can. No one shall misinterpret your action or try to take advantage of it.”

The superintendent was wise enough to avoid a mistake to which persons, placed as was he, are liable—that is, he did not overdo his part. He was so happy over the return of his little sister that he was willing not only to give the old wages and time asked for by his employes, but he felt like adding to them. He meant to make the pay of O’Hara greater than before, but changed his purpose at the last moment.

Had he added to the pay of his chief foreman it would have changed the ratio between that and the wages of the others, unless theirs, too, was increased. In that event, a reproof was likely to come from the directors, and he would find it hard to retrace his steps.

Justice called for him to do just what he had done; it would be weak to do more. "Hugh," said he, also rising to his feet, "I am not quite through with you; I am now going to ask you to do *me* a favor."

"I guess it's safe to promise in advance that I will do it—that is, of course, if it be in my power to do it."

"It is in your power. Last night, when I was in the woods near your cabin, I noticed a strange odor in the air; I could not imagine its cause, but I know now what it was."

"What was it?" asked O'Hara, turning crimson.

"You and some of your friends have been illicitly making whiskey. You have a distillery somewhere in the mountains, and, while working in the mills during the day, you have taken turns in running the still at night. I will not ask you to tell me how long you have been doing this, but you know as well as I that it is a crime."

The two men were silent a moment and then Hugh, without any appearance of agitation, said:

"You have spoken the truth; the still was not more than a hundred feet from the cabin, and caused the smell you noticed."

"How could you three attend to it when you were in the cabin?"

"Some one was generally close by. The pipe that carried off the fumes ran into the chimney of our cabin and mixed with the smoke. We took turns in looking after it. Tom and I had been there earlier in the evening, and Jack was to look in now and then against our coming back. But," added Hugh, "you said you had a favor to ask of me."

"So I have; I ask you to destroy that still, root and branch, and never take a hand in anything of the kind again."

"I cannot do that."

"Why not? You are engaged in breaking the laws of your country, for which there is a severe penalty. Now that you will have steady work, you cannot make the plea that would have been yours if the strike continued. Why can't you do as I ask you to do?"

"Because it has already been done. After I got back to the cabin last night, Tom and Jack and I went out and wound up the business. The worm has been thrown down the rocks, where it can never be found, the mash has been scattered to the four winds, and everything smashed to general flinders. It took us nearly to daylight to finish it, but we stuck to it till the job was done."

"I am delighted to hear that, what was the cause of all this?"

"I guess it must have been the little arbitrator," said O'Hara, with a smile; "they say that when a man does a bad act he feels like doing others. That may or may not be true, but I know that when a man does a good deed, the impulse to do more is awakened, and whatever good there is in him is strengthened. I have been a bad man; I grew desperate after the death of Jennie; but when I held your Dollie in my arms it seemed that some of her goodness found its way into my heart. I resolved with the help of heaven to be a better man. The first step toward becoming so was to stop the unlawful work in which I had been engaged only a short time.

“I thought that Tom and Jack would make trouble, but I didn’t care, for I could manage them. To my surprise, however, they seemed to feel just as I did. So they fell to work with a will, and the job couldn’t have been done more thoroughly. Now, if you will allow me to kiss Dollie, who has come back, I will bid you both good day.”

Harvey Bradley shook hands with his visitor, during which he handed him a liberal sum of money for Tom Hansell, who had taken part in the search for Dollie. He sent naught to Jack, for he deserved none. Then he went with Hugh to the outer door, giving him a number of encouraging words on the way.

The whistle of the Rollo Mills never screeched more cheerily than it did the next morning, and there was never a happier band of employes than the 300, young and old, who took their places again in the works.

A short time afterward Harvey Bradley opened and furnished a room where the best of reading was given free to all who chose to accept the privilege. Still later in the season a night school was started, and the skilled teacher who took charge was liberally paid by the board of directors, who never made a better investment of money.

The interest shown by the superintendent in the welfare of his employes proved to be seed sowed in good ground. All wrought faithfully and well, and when on the 1st of January the balance sheet was made up, lo! the net profits of the Rollo Mills were greater than ever before.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

It may sound like slander for me to say that the elephant, which is admittedly one of the most intelligent members of the animal creation, is also one of the most vicious and treacherous. But it is a fact all the same. I have seen one of those beasts, that had been fed and treated with the greatest kindness for years by his keeper, turn upon him like a tiger, and, seizing him with that wonderful trunk of his, dash him to death before he could do more than utter a cry of protest and terror.

I have seen another, after waiting weeks for the opportunity, suddenly grasp an innocent person, and, kneeling upon him with his beam-like legs, knead him out of all semblance of humanity.

Columbus, who was the main attraction of Barnum’s establishment some forty years ago, killed several keepers, and was likely to start on one of his terrible rampages at any moment. The giving away of a bridge in New England so injured him that he died, long before any of my young readers were born.

An elephant, fully as bad as Columbus, was Vladdok, who was brought to this country when quite young. A glimpse at his enormous ears told his African nativity at once, those from Asia and Ceylon having much smaller ears. He belonged to the old traveling circus of Blarcom & Burton, and made several journeys through our country in the days when those establishments found no use for the railways, but patiently plodded from town to town, delighting the hearts and eyes of our grandfathers and grandmothers when they were children just as we are now.

Vladdok had killed two keepers, besides badly wounding a couple of spectators in Memphis, when he yielded to one of his vicious moods. He had been fired upon and wounded more times than any one could remember, and Mr. Blarcom, who always traveled with his show, had been on the point more than once of ordering his destruction; but he was of such large size and possessed such extraordinary intelligence, that he constituted the main attraction of the exhibition and he hesitated, well aware that sooner or later, the wicked fellow would die “with his boots on.”

It was after an afternoon performance in one of the Western States that Vladdok indulged in his last rampage. His sagacious keeper had come to understand the animal so well, that he knew the outbreak was coming. While Vladdok was unusually tractable and obedient, there was a dangerous glitter in his small eyes, and an occasional nervous movement of his head, which proved that he was only biding his time and waiting for the grand chance to present itself.

Fortunately, he did not rebel until after the exhibition was over, and the crowds had departed. Then, with a fierce trumpeting and one vast shiver of his enormous bulk, he made a dash which snapped his chains like so much whip-cord and went through the side of the tent as though it were cardboard.

On his wild charge, which set all the rest of the animals in a panic, he reached for his keeper, who with prodding spear and shouts, interposed himself in his path and tried to check him. But the man's inimitable dexterity and good fortune enabled him to dodge the beast and escape by a hair's breadth. The next minute, the elephant reached the public highway, down which he swung awkwardly but swiftly, on an excursion that was destined to be the most tragic in his whole career.

The first object on which he vented his wrath was a team of horses, driven by a farmer, whose wife was sitting beside him on the front seat. Neither they nor the team knew their danger until the avalanche of fury was upon them. The animals screamed in an agony of fright, and were rearing and plunging, when Vladdok grasped one with his trunk, lifted him in the air and dashed him to death. The other broke loose and plunged off at such headlong speed, that the elephant followed him only a few paces, when he turned to attack the man and woman.

But they were nowhere in sight, and, with a trumpet of disgust, he wheeled about, and turning from the highway, took to the woods.

The couple were saved by a singular occurrence. The violent rearing and backing of the horses overturned the wagon body, and the farmer and his better half were caught beneath it, before they could escape. They had sense enough to remain quiet, until the brute left, when they crept out, none the worse for their mishap.

"Consarn his pictur!" exclaimed the husband; "if that don't beat all creation! I allers said that circuses and shows was a burnin' shame, and now I *know* it; I'll make the owner of that elephant pay ten thousand dollars for the damage he done us, for he scart you and me so bad Betsy, that we'll never grow another inch."

Meanwhile, the runaway kept things moving. He knew his keeper and attendants were hot on his trail, and his sudden change of course was undoubtedly with a view of misleading them. It is hardly to be supposed that he expected to find any "game" in the woods, but nevertheless he did.

It so happened that Jack Norton and Billy Wiggins, a couple of boys not more than fourteen years of age, were engaged on a little hunt that same afternoon. The teachers had sent such bad reports home about them that their parents inflicted the most awful kind of punishment; they did not permit them to attend the circus, to which they had been looking forward for weeks. The father of Billy was specially stern, and forbade his hopeful to take his gun, when he joined Jack on a little hunting ramble in the woods. Mr. Norton felt some slight compunctions, when he noted how patiently his boy accepted his fate, and relented to that degree that he permitted him to take his rifle, though he knew there was little chance of his securing any game.

The boys had walked about a mile, and, coming to a fallen tree, sat down to rest awhile, for the day was warm and the gun which they had taken turns in carrying, was heavy.

“I guess this hunt ain’t agoin’ to amount to much,” sighed Jack, as he leaned the rifle against the prostrate trunk, on which they were seated.

“Why not?” asked Billy.

“ ’Cause there ain’t nothin’ to hunt; I heerd Budge Jones say that when he was a boy, these woods used to be full of bears and deers and tigers and lions and giraffes and that sort of thing.”

“Yes, and the folks were so mean they killed ’em all, but I’ve the idea, Jack, that maybe some of the lions or tigers has hid somewhere in the woods and we might find ’em.”

“Golly! I don’t know whether I’d want to find ’em or not,” replied Jack, looking about him, with a scared expression.

“Why not? Hain’t you got a gun?”

“Yes, but while I was killin’ one the others might chaw me all to pieces; but if there was only one, I wouldn’t care, if he was an elephant as big as a barn——”

“My gracious! there he comes!”

A terrific crashing of the undergrowth caused both lads to glance affrightedly behind them, and there, sure enough, was Vladdok, the fearful elephant, almost upon them. They started to run, their courses so diverging that the beast was forced to select one and let the other alone for the moment. He fixed upon Billy Wiggins, who had taken barely twenty steps, when the trunk of the beast inclosed his waist and he was lifted, as if he was a feather from the ground, and the next instant he felt himself whizzing through space.

A marvelous providence saved him. Instead of dashing him against a tree, or upon the ground, the elephant, in one of his mad freaks, flung him from him as though he was a ball. He spun through the air, the leaves and limbs whizzing against his face and body, and instinctively clutching with both hands, succeeded in grasping enough branches to support the weight of his body and check his descent.

Then, when he collected his senses and stared around, he found that he was a dozen yards above the ground, with the elephant beneath, looking up, and apparently waiting for him to fall within his reach, that he might finish him.

“Not much,” muttered Billy; “I’m going to stay here and I don’t believe you know how to climb a tree. Helloa! how do you like *that*?”

Jack Norton had dashed only a few yards, when the terrified look he cast over his shoulder told him the elephant was giving his whole attention to Billy, and seemed to have forgotten all about him. Instantly he was filled with alarm for his young friend, and started back to the log to get his rifle, that neither had thought of in the panic.

As he knelt behind the fallen tree, to make his aim sure, he descried a queer object going through the limbs of a large oak, and did not identify it, until it lodged fast, as his friend Billy Wiggins.

Jack had no more idea of the fatal point at which to aim his weapon than you have, but knowing that he must do something, and, with a dread that the elephant after all, might succeed in climbing the oak and getting at his friend, he let fly.

Gordon Cumming himself could not have done better. The tiny bullet bored its way into the vast bulk, just back of the fore leg and went directly through the heart. The huge brute, as if conscious that he was mortally hurt, swung part way round, so as to face the point whence the shot had come. Catching sight of the kneeling youngster, with the muzzle of his rifle still smoking, he plunged toward him. He took a couple of steps, swayed to one side, moved uncertainly forward again, then stopped, tried to steady himself, and finally went over sideways, like a mountain, crashing the saplings and undergrowth near him, and snapping one of his magnificent tusks into splinters. He was dead.

When the boys fully comprehended what had taken place, they were not a little alarmed and puzzled, and started home, wondering whether their game was a descendant of the creatures that used to inhabit that section, or whether he was a visitor to these parts. They had not gone far, however, when they met the attaches of the menagerie and circus to whom they related what had occurred.

The proprietors were relieved on learning the whole truth, for there could be little doubt that the sudden ending of the career of Vladdok was the means of saving more than one person from death.

As for Jack Norton and Billy Wiggins, it was generally conceded that they spoke the truth, when they declared:

“Our fathers wouldn’t let us go to the circus that afternoon, but I guess we had a bigger circus than any of you all to ourselves.”

LOST IN THE SOUTH SEA.

Captain William Gooding was commander of the *Tewksbury Sweet*, of Portland, Maine, and was lost in the South Pacific in the spring of 1889. This fine American bark sailed from New Castle, New South Wales, on the 17th of March, bound for Hong Kong. Everything went well until the 9th of the following month, when she encountered a severe gale. Despite all that skillful seamanship could do, and in the face of the most strenuous exertions, she struck the dangerous Susanne Reef, near Poseat Island, one of the Caroline group of the South Sea.

The wreck was a total one. The vessel broke up rapidly, and seeing that nothing could be done, the captain and crew, numbering ten men in all, took to one of the boats, carrying with them only a single chronometer belonging to the ship. Even after entering the small boat they were still in great danger, and only succeeded after the utmost difficulty in reaching a small islet some miles to the southward. The storm was still raging so violently that the shelter was a most welcome one, though as there were no animals or vegetation, or even water upon the island, their stay of necessity could be only temporary. They had saved nothing to eat or drink, and to remain where they were meant a lingering death.

After several hours waiting, the tempest abated somewhat, and launching their boat once more, they rowed toward the main island.

“The end is likely to be the same in either case,” remarked the captain to the second mate, George W. Harrison, as they approached the land.

“And why?” inquired the latter: “we shall find food and water there.”

“True enough; but there are no fiercer savages on the South Sea than those of this island, and I have never heard that they were particularly friendly toward the crews of shipwrecked vessels.”

“They may not discover us until we can signal some passing ship.”

“There is no possibility of any such good fortune as that.”

“Stranger things have happened, and—”

“Does that look like it?” interrupted the captain in some excitement, pointing toward the island.

The sight that met the gaze of every one was startling. Fully thirty canoes, each filled with eight or ten natives, were putting off from shore and heading toward them. Several of the crew favored turning about, and putting to sea; but that would have been not only hopeless, but would have invited attack. Nothing is so encouraging to an enemy as flight on the part of his opponent. It impels him to greater exertions and gives him a bravery which otherwise he may not feel.

The savages, in their light, graceful craft, and with their great skill in manipulating them, would have overhauled the white men “hand over hand.”

There was a faint hope that by presenting a bold front, and acting as though they believed in the friendship of the savages that they might spare the unfortunates. At any rate, it was clear there was no choice but to go ahead, and the white men did so, rowing leisurely and calmly, though the chances in doing so were hastening their own doom.

There could be no mistaking the ardor of the ferocious natives. They paddled with might and main, and fully a dozen, in their eagerness, leaped into the sea and swam ahead of their canoes. They were magnificent swimmers, speeding through the water like so many dolphins. The Americans, even in their frightful peril, could not repress their admiration.

“Did you ever see anything like it?” asked first mate Watchman; “they are like so many sharks.”

“They are indeed,” was the significant response of Captain Gooding, “and I would like it better if they were real sharks.”

“Here they are!”

Sure enough; they surrounded the boat in a twinkling, and shouting and screeching like so many demons, clambered over the gunwales until there was danger of swamping the craft.

Had our friends possessed firearms, they would have made a desperate resistance, and possibly might have beaten off their assailants; but, as it was, they acted the part of wisdom in offering no opposition to the presence or actions of their unwelcome visitors.

The latter proved that they meant business from the first, for hardly were they in the boat when they began stripping the officers and sailors of their property. When they ceased the men had nothing left but their undershirts, their despoilers flinging the garments into the canoes that now crowded around.

No more plunder being obtainable, the fleet headed for land, with their captives in anything but a cheerful frame of mind. The shore was lined with women and children, who answered the shouts of their friends in the boats by running back and forth, screeching and yelling and dancing, as if unable to restrain themselves until the arrival of their victims.

The sailors believed they would be speedily killed and eaten, the latter horror might have been escaped had they known, what they afterward learned, that the savages of those islands are not cannibals.

The poor fellows stepped from their boat upon the shore, where they were immediately environed by the fierce men, women and children, half naked, wild, boisterous, and seemingly impatient to rend them to pieces. The prisoners could do nothing but meekly await the next step in the tragedy.

It was during these trying moments that the sailors were astounded to hear, amid the babel of voices, several words spoken in English. Staring about them to learn the meaning of such a strange thing, they saw a man attired as were the others, that is with only a piece of cloth about his hips, whose complexion and features showed that he belonged to the same race with themselves.

He advanced in a cheery, hearty way, and shaking hands with the new arrivals, said:

“I think you did not expect to find me here.”

“Indeed we did not,” was the reply; “you appear to be an Englishman.”

“So I am, and I am anxious to give you all the help I can, for your situation is anything but a desirable one.”

“There can be no doubt of that. But how is it that you are here? Were you shipwrecked like ourselves?”

“No; I may say I was deserted. My name is Charles Irons, and I was left at Poseat by a trading vessel four years ago.”

“How came that?”

“I was to act as the agent of a company of traders on the Cocoanut Islands. Well, the vessel left me, as I first told you, and that was the last of it. They forgot all about me, or more likely, did not care to keep their promise, for I have never seen anything of the vessel since.”

“What an outrage!”

“It was, and there couldn’t have been a more wretched person than I was for several months. I looked longingly out to sea for the ship that never came, and chafed like a man who is bound hand and foot. But,” added the Englishman with a smile, “there is nothing like making the best of things. You can accustom yourself almost to anything if you will only make up your mind to do so. I was among these people and there was no help for it, so I decided to adopt their ways and become one of them.”

“You decided when in Rome to do as the Romans do,” suggested the captain, who, like his companions, was greatly cheered, not only by the presence and friendship of the Englishman, but by the fact that the savages, who watched the interview with interest, showed no disposition to interfere.

“That’s it. There are a great many worse people in this world than these. They are not cannibals, as are many of their neighbors, and they have never harmed me.”

“But what about us?” was the anxious inquiry.

The Englishman looked grave.

“I cannot say what their intentions are, but I am afraid they are bad. They have been used ill by some of the vessels that have stopped here, and are naturally suspicious of all white people. Then, too, they are revengeful, and like all barbarians are satisfied, if aggrieved against our race, to get their satisfaction out of any member of it, whether he is the one who injured them, or is entirely innocent.”

“You seem to be regarded with high favor here.”

“I am. I stand next to the chief in authority, so you see I have reason to believe I may be of some service to you. You may be sure that I shall leave no stone unturned to help you.”

The captain and his companions gave expression to their deep gratitude, and Irons continued in his bluff, pleasant manner:

“I guess I am about as much a savage as any of them. If I hadn’t been I never would have obtained any control over them. I have seven native wives, and find I am forgetting a great many details of civilization, while my desire to return home is growing less every day. After all, what difference does it make where you are? A man has only a few years to live, and as long as he is contented, he is a fool to rebel.”

There may have been good philosophy in all this, and the captain did not attempt to gainsay it, but, all the same, it was hard for him to understand how any one could be so placed as to lose his yearning for his home and his native land.

It was several days afterward, when the captives had become somewhat accustomed to their surroundings, that Captain Gooding found he and his men were mixed in their reckoning.

“It is a question among us whether this is Thursday or Friday,” said he, addressing Irons; “can you settle it for us?”

The Englishman looked at the captain in an odd way and replied:

“I haven’t the remotest idea of what day in the week it is, nor what is the month. It seems four years ago that I was left here, but I am not sure of it. Will you please give me the year and month?”

“This is April, 1889.”

The Englishman bent his head for a few minutes in deep thought. He was recalling the past, with its singular incidents of his career. When he looked up he said:

“Yes; it is four years and more since I was abandoned, and if you stay that long you will be content to remain all your lives.”

The captain shook his head, and his eyes were dimmed as he replied:

“I never could forget the loved ones at home, Irons; I would prefer death at once to a lingering imprisonment here.”

“Well, I am going to help you all to leave just as soon as it can be done. I understand how you feel, and sympathize with you.”

The Englishman proved himself the most valuable kind of a friend. The authority which he possessed over these savage South Sea Islanders was stretched to the utmost, but he never hesitated to employ it. But for his presence the Americans would have been put to death within a few hours at most of their arrival on the mainland, and without his aid it would have been impossible for them ever to have gotten away.

When everything was in shape, Irons hired a canoe of the natives for the use of his friends. The craft was not large enough to contain all the party, and since all real peril had passed, there was no fear in following the course that had been agreed upon.

Captain Gooding, second mate Harrison; and one of the sailors left Poseat in the canoe, first mate Watchman and his six companions remaining on the island. This was ten days after the loss of the *Tewksbury Sweet*.

Captain Gooding and all the sailors were in the best of spirits, for they were confident that their wearisome captivity was substantially over. The three made their way from island to island, stopping at eight different points, sometimes for days, and even weeks. Finally they arrived at Ruk, where they found a missionary station, and received the most hospitable treatment.

The good men owned a boat abundantly large enough to carry twenty persons, and the captain asked its use with which to bring the rest of his crew from Poseat. This was asking more than would be supposed, for the missionaries told them that they were surrounded by hostile natives, who were liable to an outbreak at any hour, in which event the only means of escape the white men possessed was the boat.

The missionaries, however, gave their consent, and Captain Gooding, hoisting sail in the staunch centre-boarder, set sail for Poseat, where he safely arrived, without unnecessary delay. He found the first mate and his sailors well and in high spirits, though they were beginning to wonder whether their captain, like the friends of Irons, had not forgotten, and concluded to leave them to themselves.

No objection was offered to their departure, and bidding an affectionate good-by to the Englishman, who had proven the best kind of a friend, they returned to the missionary island. Two months later the missionary vessel, the *Morning Star*, arrived, and carried them all to Honolulu, which was reached in November. Thence Captain Gooding and a part of the crew were brought by the steamer *Australia* to San Francisco, from which point the captain made his way to his home in Yarmouth, where his family and friends welcomed him back as one risen from the dead, for they had long given up hope of ever seeing him again.

AN UNPLEASANT COMPANION.

“Say, Jack, the shellbarks are droppin’ thick down in Big Woods. What a chance for a fellow to lay up a bushel or two before the crowd gets down there in the morning.”

“Wouldn’t it, though, Ned!” I replied wistfully, for if there was anything I had a fondness for, it was shellbarks.

We were trudging home to our dinner, for Ned and I lived close to the schoolhouse, much to the envy of some less fortunate pupils who brought their noonday meal with them in tin pails. It was a late September Friday, and a soft golden haze lay on hillside and woodland, and the quail were whistling in the furrows; and, as Ned spoke, I could see in my mind’s eye just how Big Woods would look that afternoon with the soft sunlight slanting through the trees, and glimmering on the quiet waters of the creek.

“Well, Jack, will you go?” said Ned abruptly.

“You mean will I play truant?” I asked, a little startled.

“Yes; there’s no danger, Jack; we’ll tell the teacher we had to stay home to cut corn.”

At first, I resisted Ned’s appeal. I had played truant once before, a long time ago, and the memory of the punishment that I received in the woodshed at home was still strongly impressed on my memory.

But this, I thought, was an exceptional case, I badly wanted a bushel or two of shellbarks, and I knew full well that, unless they were gathered that afternoon, they wouldn’t be gathered at all; for bright and early the next morning all the boys in the neighborhood would be down in Big Woods, armed with clubs and baskets and sacks, and even the squirrels would stand a poor show after that invasion.

In our selfishness, we never thought that other people might have a fondness for shellbarks as well as ourselves. So, after a little more pleading on Ned’s part, I gave in, and we agreed to meet down at the foot of our orchard, as soon as dinner was over, for Ned lived right across, on the next farm. In a corner of the barn, I found my old chestnut club, a hickory stave, well coiled with lead at the top. Shoving this under my jacket, so no prying eyes could see it, I joined Ned at the meeting-place, and off we went in high spirits for the Yellow-breeches.

It was a good mile to Big Woods, for we had to circle away down to Hake’s Mill to get across the creek, but we felt well repaid for our trouble when we arrived there. The fallen nuts lay thick amid the dead leaves, and up on the half-naked trees the splitting hulls hung in clusters, willing to drop their burden at the least rustle of the breeze.

We heaped the shellbarks in great piles, ready to stow away in Ned’s big wheat bag; and, when the ground was cleaned up pretty well, and the leaves had been thoroughly raked, we turned our attention to a close cluster of trees that stood close by the creek. These nuts were unusually large, and thin-shelled. The hulls were cracked apart, but very few nuts lay on the ground, so I hauled out my club, and drove it fairly into the heart of the tree. A shower of nuts came down, with a merry clatter that gladdened our hearts; but the club, striking the trunk of the tree, bounded sideways and lodged in the crotch of a limb overhanging the creek, some twenty or thirty feet above the water.

Here was a dilemma. I didn't want to lose that club, for it had done good service in past autumns, and had gone through a great many hairbreadth escapes.

If we tried to dislodge it by hurling sticks or stones, it would fall into the water, and just at that point the creek was very deep, and moreover, as popular tradition held, a treacherous undertow existed which would render the recovery of the club impossible.

"Climb the tree, Jack," said Ned; "that's your only chance."

I was always considered a pretty good climber, so, after a little hesitation (for this was an unusually difficult tree), I started up the slippery trunk, and, with Ned's friendly aid, pulled myself among the lower limbs.

It was an easy matter to reach the particular bough that I wanted, but then came the tug. I was half-inclined to give up the whole thing and go down to the ground, but Ned kept egging me on so confidently that I determined to go through with it.

Straddling the limb, I took a firm hold with both hands in front of me, for no other boughs were close enough to be grasped, and thus inch by inch I moved cautiously forward.

The branch creaked and groaned, and at last began to bend in such an alarming fashion that I stopped short.

There was the club, not four feet away now, and far below I could see the quiet waters of the creek, wrinkling the reflected foliage as a dropping nut or stray leaf rippled the surface.

"You're nearly there, now," cried Ned, with hearty encouragement; "just a little more, Jack, and you'll have it.

"But the limb will break," I called down.

"No, it won't," he insisted, "don't be afraid."

That settled it. I wasn't afraid, and Ned should know it.

I took a firmer grip on the bough, and slid forward half a foot.

Crack, crack,—the big branch slowly began to split, and as I made a frantic effort to crawl back, a strange noise from the bushy part of the tree overhead turned my gaze upward.

It's a wonder my hair didn't turn white that very instant, for what I saw was a big, tawny wild-cat, with blazing eyes and quivering claws, crouched on a narrow limb. I knew the animal was going to spring, and I tried to shout as loudly as I could, but my tongue stuck to the roof of my mouth, and the only sound I made was an odd cry that caused Ned to laugh, for he couldn’t see what was the matter from where he stood.

Then like a streak the brute plumped down on my back, and with a tremendous splash, limb, wildcat, and myself went into the creek.

I heard Ned shout, as the water closed over me, and then everything became dark.

I rose to the surface terribly frightened, for, sad to relate, I had never learned to swim, and Ned could do very little in that direction. Instead of clutching at the empty air, as most drowning persons do, I caught hold of something substantial; and when the water was out of my eyes and out of my stomach, for I had swallowed about a pint, I saw that I was hanging to the bushy end of the broken limb. That was all very well, but the next thing I observed was not so pleasant, for six feet distant, on the thick part of the branch, sat the wild-cat, apparently none the worse for his fall. His sharp claws were driven into the bark, and he was calmly licking his dripping fur. Meanwhile the current was sweeping us down stream, and Ned was running along the bank in a sad state of fright and excitement. My back began to hurt pretty badly, and I discovered that my face was torn and bleeding in one or two places, though whether this was caused by the fall or by the wild-cat I did not know.

“Swim, Jack, let go and swim,” shouted Ned, and then, remembering perhaps that I was unable to follow his instructions, he suddenly turned and ran back through the woods at the top of his speed, instead of making any effort to help me.

I was badly scared before, and now, when I saw, as I supposed, my last hope vanish, I began to shout for help as loudly as I could.

But at the very first cry the wild-cat lifted his head, and emitted a vicious snarl. As I howled louder than ever, he advanced a foot or two along the limb, ripping off the bark, and fixing his big glaring eyes savagely on my face.

I was terrified into silence, and, as soon as I ceased shouting, the brute stopped and coolly proceeded to lick his fur again.

Apparently, he did not object to my presence so long as I remained quiet. The worst of it was that my end of the branch was pretty far down in the water, and threatened every moment to carry me entirely under the surface.

In this precarious situation, I drifted down the creek, until the bend drew near that sweeps round to Hake’s Mill. Here the country was a little more open, and a farmhouse came into sight over the brow of a hill.

There was a chance of rescue, and in spite of my previous experience, I decided to try it, for my limbs were becoming chilled, and I knew I could not hold on much longer.

“Help! Help!” I cried with might and main. No answer came back, but before I could shout a third time the wild-cat uttered a snarl, and began creeping toward me, inch by inch, and lashing the water fiercely with his tail. Lower and lower sank the branch, until my shoulders were submerged, and still the beast kept advancing.

I continued to shout, but no welcome voice responded, only empty echoes floating back from the hills.

Then I must have given up all hope, for I remember wondering vaguely what had become of Ned, and what they were doing in school, and whether my absence was noticed or not.

The cold water was rippling about my neck now, and the wild-cat was so close that I could note the horrible colors of the glaring eyes, and feel the hot breath in my face. I wondered how it would feel when those two rows of needle-like teeth met in my flesh; and then, before I could think any more, a deafening report filled my ears, and, through the cloud of smoke that rolled over the creek, the wild-cat bounded high in air, and fell into the water with a loud splash. That was all I remembered then. The next thing I knew, I was lying in a grassy hollow, alongside the creek, while Ned and an old farmer bent over me, and threw water in my face. Ned’s desertion was explained. He had cut off the bend in the creek by running over the hill, and, accompanied by the farmer, who happened to be down in the woods hunting rabbits, they had arrived just in time to shoot the wild-cat and drag me out of the water. That was the last time I played truant. I didn’t lose my share of the shellbarks, for Ned went down early the next morning and got them, but I did lose the chestnut club, and what was worse, in spite of my sore back, I spent a very unpleasant quarter of an hour out in the woodshed, just two days later, and Ned, I am happy to say, passed through the same edifying experience.

A STIRRING INCIDENT.

India is the home of the deadliest serpents and fiercest wild beasts on the globe. When it is stated that more than twenty thousand persons are killed annually by the snakes and animals of that country, some idea may be formed of its attractions in the way of a residence. To this should be added the fact that, during certain seasons, the climate is like that of Sahara itself. For days and nights the thermometer stands above one hundred degrees in the shade and in the city of Madras, unacclimated persons have died at midnight in their beds from apoplexy caused by the appalling temperature.

Among the venomous serpents of India, the *cobra di capello* holds foremost rank, though it is claimed that a still more deadly reptile has been found in the interior, and I believe the British Museum has one of these terrible creatures, whose bite brings death with the suddenness of the lightning stroke. However, the cobra has been known to strike two persons in instant succession, proving fatal to both within ten minutes of each other. It is hard to conceive of any serpent more venomously destructive than this.

On one of the flaming Sunday mornings, when there was not a cloud in the brazen skies, a well known missionary came home from early service and seated himself at the breakfast-table with his family. The door of the dining-room was open and the Teluga school-teacher was outside, when he became interested in a novel sight. A frog was hopping along the front veranda, with an immense cobra chasing it. The serpent struck at it repeatedly, but the fugitive, in its desperation, eluded each blow, giving utterance to pitiful cries, as a frog will do when pursued by a snake.

The end of the veranda reached, the frog leaped off, and the cobra dropped to the ground in hot pursuit, but a box, standing near, offered shelter. The creature scrambled beneath, just in time to avoid another swift blow of the reptile, which was unable to follow it. The cobra glided around the box, seeking some avenue by which to reach his victim, but, finding none, moved off in the grass and disappeared.

The teacher hurried into the dining-room, with the announcement of what he had seen. The missionary listened gravely and then inquired:

“Where is the cobra now?”

“I cannot tell, sir; he moved off among the flower-pots, but I do not know whither he went.”

“It is not my practice to go shooting on Sunday,” remarked the minister, “but it won’t do to have that serpent where it is liable to bite one of us. He must have a hole somewhere near the flower-pots; please keep watch while I get my pistol.”

The missionary always kept a loaded revolver for use when traveling through the jungle at night, and he speedily stepped out on the veranda, with the weapon in hand, and started to find the cobra.

Two large native flower-pots stood within a couple of yards of the veranda. Each contained a fragrant rose, of which the good man's wife was very fond. Every day she spent some time sprinkling them with water or removing the dead leaves, never suspecting what proved to be the fact that while thus employed, she continually moved about a spot where an immense cobra lay coiled.

An opening was discovered directly between the flower pots, partly concealed by the grass. It was about as thick as a man's wrist, and descended perpendicularly, expanding into a small chamber.

The minister called for a hand-mirror, and with little trouble threw the bright reflection of the sun into the hole, a little more than a foot deep, fully lighting up the interior.

The cobra was there! It lay motionless in a glistening coil, as if resting from its fruitless pursuit of the frog and brooding over its disappointment. It was an alarming sight, but the good man kept cool, and meant business from the start.

Taking a piece of broken wagon tire, he thrust it slantingly into the hole, to hold the serpent a prisoner, and shoving the muzzle of his revolver forward, he let fly.

Not the slightest motion followed. He had missed. He now gently turned the tire edgewise and fired again. A furious writhing followed, proving that the snake had been hit hard. The tire was instantly turned over flat to prevent its coming out. It struck fiercely at the iron, which in a minute was shifted on its edge again, and the missionary emptied the remaining chambers of his revolver down the hole. Then he turned up the tire once more, and allowed the hideous head to dart forth.

The minister had brought with him a pair of large hedge shears, with which he seized the protruding neck, drew out the snake and gave it a flirt toward the compound. He was so absorbed with his task that he had not noticed the crowd of men, women and children that had gathered to watch the results of his hunt. When they saw a huge cobra flying through the air toward them, there was a scampering and screaming, which might have been less had they known that the grip of the shears had dislocated the serpent's neck.

The good man did not forget that whenever you find one deadly serpent, another is quite certain to be close at hand. He had passed the wagon tire to the teacher, when he began pulling out the wounded cobra, and asked him to insert it again without an instant's delay. This was done, and returning with the hand-glass, the missionary once more conveyed the rays into the underground chamber.

Sure enough a second cobra was there, wriggling and squirming in a way to show that he had received some of the bullets intended for his companion. The revolver was reloaded and a fusillade opened, standing off a few paces, the marksman waited for the head to come forth that he might seize and draw it out as he had done with the other.

The wounded reptile continued its furious squirming and striking, but its head did not appear, until shot after shot had been fired. At last it showed itself, and was immediately gripped with the shears. Dropping the pistol, the missionary employed both hands in the effort, and running backward a few steps, the whole frightful length of the serpent was drawn out upon the ground.

Remembering their former experience, the crowd moved away, but the missionary spared them a second fright.

Both cobras being helpless, an examination was made of them. The second one showed the marks of fourteen pistol balls through his body, any three of which would have proved fatal, but he was still full of fight, and died while trying to strike the persons near him.

The serpents were now stretched out on the veranda and measured one of them five feet eleven inches long, and the other six feet two inches. The last is an extraordinary size, rarely seen even in the favorite haunts of the reptile. An investigation of their home left no doubt that they had been living for months right among the flower pots that were attended to daily, and within six feet of the veranda and twelve feet of the door of the missionary’s study.

As for the frog that crawled under the box just in time to save himself, he was well and flourishing at the last accounts.

CYCLONES AND TORNADOES.

Science as yet has not been able to grasp the laws that govern cyclones. They seem to be the result of some intensely electric condition of the elements, which finds an expression in that form. Cyclones, until within a few years, meant those circular tempests encountered in the Pacific and Indian oceans. They are the most destructive of all storms, being far more deadly than monsoons and tornadoes.

All navigators, when caught in a cyclone know how to get out of it. They have only to sail at right angles to the wind, when they will either pass beyond the outer rim of the circular sweep, or reach the center, where the ocean is calm.

The diameters of the ocean cyclones range from fifty to five hundred or a thousand miles. Professor Douglas, of Ann Arbor University, entertains his friends now and then by manufacturing miniature cyclones. He first suspends a large copper plate by silken cords. The plate is heavily charged with electricity, which hangs below in a bag-like mass. He uses arsenious acid gas, which gives the electricity a greenish tint. That mass of electricity becomes a perfect little cyclone. It is funnel-shaped and spins around like a top. When he moves the plate over a table, his cyclone catches up pennies, pens, pith balls and other small articles, and scatters them in every direction.

Cyclones never touch the equator, though the ocean ones are rare outside the torrid one. They are caused by the meeting of contrary currents of winds, and are known under the names of hurricanes, typhoons, whirlwinds or tornadoes. Those terrifying outbursts which now and then cause so much destruction in our own country seem to be the concentration of the prodigious force of an immense ocean cyclone within a small space, which renders them resistless.

A writer in the *N. Y. Herald* gives some interesting facts regarding these scourges of the air. While the cyclone, as we have shown, may have a diameter of hundreds of miles, the track of a tornado is often limited to a few hundred feet, and rarely has the width of half a mile.

The cyclone carries with it a velocity of as much as 100 to 140 miles an hour. It sends a certain amount of warning ahead of its track, and the acceleration of the wind’s speed at any given point, is gradual.

The tornado falls almost without notice, or rather the indications are often so similar to those of an ordinary thunderstorm that only a skilled and careful observer can detect the difference.

The phenomena and effects of cyclones in the West Indies have long been subjects of study and observation. As the center approaches a ship she is assaulted by wind of a terrible force and a sea that is almost indescribable. The water no longer runs in waves of regular onward motion, but leaps up in pyramids and peaks. The wind swirls and strikes until wherever there is a chance for vibration or flutter, even in tightly furled sails, the fabric soon gives way. I once saw a brig go drifting past us in a West Indies cyclone with everything furled and closely lashed with sea gaskets. We were in company nearly at the height of the storm, when the center was only a few miles away. There was a spot in the bunt of the foretopsail where the sail was not tightly stowed, and for several hours it had doubtless been fluttering under tremendous pressure. As I watched her a little white puff went out of the bunt of the topsail, and then the destruction of the sail was rapid. Long ribbons of canvas went slithering off as if a huge file had rasped the yard arm, and in a short time there was nothing left on the yard except the bolt ropes and the reef tackles. We could do nothing to help the crew, for it was doubtful whether we could keep off the reefs ourselves, and the brig passed out of sight to her certain doom.

The local tornado that so frequently plays havoc with property and life in the West is, like the cyclone, a revolving force, but it carries with it a variety of phenomena wholly distinct from those that accompany the larger storm. Many of the effects of one tornado are wholly absent in others, and the indications that in one case have been followed by a terrible disaster are not infrequently found at other times to presage merely a heavy thunder shower.

The freaks of a tornado are wholly unaccountable. In some cases not an object in its track will fail to feel its power for long distances; in other instances it will seem to act like a cannon-ball that plows up the earth on striking, then rises and strikes again, leaving the space between untouched. Sometimes it will go through a forest leveling the trees as though a gang of axemen had plied their tools on lines laid out by surveyors, nothing outside the track being touched; but again in similar windfalls there will be found occasional pockets scored in the forest growth jutting off the right line, like small lagoons opening into a flowing stream. These seem to have been caused by a sort of attendant whirlwind—a baby offspring from the main monster, which, having sprung away from the chief disturbance, scoops a hole in the woods and then expires or rejoins the original movement.

I have seen one of the most violent and, so to speak, compressed of these storms, cut a road through thick woods so that at a distance the edges stood out clear and sharp against the sky as would those of a railway cutting through earth. Trees standing at the edge of the track had their branches clean swept one side while on the other there was no perceptible disturbance of the foliage.

Sometimes the tornado acts like an enormous scoop, catching up every movable thing and sweeping it miles away: and again it becomes a depositor, as if, tired of carrying so much dead weight, it dumped it upon the earth preparatory to grabbing up a new cargo. These effects are particularly noticeable in the tornado that goes by jumps. When it strikes and absorbs a mass of debris it seems to spring up again like a projectile that grazes the surface. For a space there will be a very high wind and some damage, but no such disaster as the tornado has previously wrought. Out of the clouds will come occasional heavy missiles and deluges of water. Then down goes the tornado again crashing and scattering by its own force and adding to its destructive power by a battery of timbers and other objects brought along from the previous impact. Relieved of these masses, it again gathers up miscellaneous movables and repeats its previous operation.

The force with which these objects strike is best seen when they fall outside of the tornado’s path, since the work done by the missile is not then disturbed by the general destructive force of the storm. Thus, near Racine, Wis., I have known an ordinary fence rail, slightly sharpened on one end, to be driven against a young tree like a spear and pierce it several feet. The velocity of the rail must have been something enormous, or otherwise the rail would have glanced from such a round and elastic object.

Many of the settlers in the tornado districts of Southern Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, and Nebraska excavate a deep cellar beneath their houses and cover it with heavy timbers as a place of refuge for their families when a tornado threatens to strike them. While these dugouts are usually effective, they are not always so. There have been instances where families having only time to descend and not time enough to close the trap door have been exposed to the storm’s full fury by the tornado getting into the opening and lifting off the whole roof after having first swept away the house above. Another pathetic case resulted in the death of a whole family by an extraordinary freak of the tornado. The storm first struck a large pond and swept up all the water in it. Its next plunge deposited this water on one of these dugouts, and the family were drowned like chipmunks in a hole.

Some of the western tornadoes are accompanied by electrical manifestations to an extent that has originated a belief in electricity as their cause. These disturbances are very marked in some cases, while in others they have not been noticed. In one tornado in Central Illinois electricity played very peculiar antics not only in the tornado’s track, but also at some distance from it. In the ruined houses all the iron work was found to have been strongly magnetized, so that pokers, flatirons and other metal objects were found adhering to each other. Just off the tornado’s track the same effects were noticed, and several persons experienced sharp electric shocks during the passage of the storm. Afterward it was found that the magnetic influence was so strong that clocks and watches were stopped and rendered wholly useless.

The scooping action of the tornado sometimes makes considerable changes in the topography of the country, as when it gathers up the water of a large pond or water course and makes a new pond or opens a new channel. At Wallingford the water in a pond of very large size was taken bodily from its bed, carried up a hill and dropped nearly in one mass, so that gullies and ravines were cut in every direction.

There is a divide in Northeastern Illinois between streams flowing into Lake Michigan and those running to the Mississippi. So level is a portion of the land on the summit, and so slight the elevation above the lake, that in wet seasons the surface-water seems almost as willing to go one way as the other; and on one occasion the upper streams of the Desplaines River were nearly permanently diverted toward the lake by a tornado that gathered up the water and scored the surface in its track toward the east.

Many are the stories told of the way in which objects are carried away by the wind and left in strange places. In one Illinois tornado two children and an infant were caught up. The dead bodies of the children were found only a few hundred feet distant, but the infant was picked up alive more than a mile away from the spot where the tornado swept the children up. An accordion that must have come a long distance—for it was never claimed—was found so entangled in the branches of a tree that it was alternately pulled apart and pressed together by the wind, thus creating such weird and uncanny music during a whole night that an already sufficiently scared settlement of negroes were kept in a state of frantic dismay until daylight revealed the cause.

In another case a farmer who followed the tornado’s track in search of missing cattle was astonished to discover one of his cows lodged about twenty feet above the ground in the branches of a half-stripped maple.

“I allers knew that was an active heifer,” he remarked, as he came in sight of her hanging over the slanting limb, “but I never allowed she could climb a tree.”

LOST IN A BLIZZARD.

If I were given my choice between a visit from a cyclone or a blizzard, I would unhesitatingly choose the former. True, there is no resisting its terrific power, and a man caught in its embrace is as helpless as a child when seized by a Bengal tiger; but there is a chance of escape, and the whole thing is over in a few minutes. You may be lifted into the air and dropped with only a few broken bones, or, by plunging into a "cyclone pit," the fury of the sky may glide harmlessly over your head; but in the case of a blizzard, however, let me tell you the one woeful experience of my life.

The snow fell steadily for two days and nights, and looking out from my home in western Kansas I saw that it lay fully three feet on a level. By a strange providence my wife, who had been my brave and faithful helper for several years, was away on a visit to her friends in Topeka, and my only companion was my servant Jack, a middle-aged African, who in his youth was a slave in Kentucky.

Things had not gone well with us of late. The grasshoppers and drought played the mischief with out crops, and it was a question with me for months whether the wisest course to take was not to throw up my hands, let everything go to the bow-wows and, in the dry-goods firm, that I knew was returning to St. Louis, resume my situation still open for me. A man hates to confess himself beaten, and I decided to remain where I was one more year. Then, if there was no improvement, I would turn my back on Kansas forever.

"Master Thomas," said Jack, as the dismal December afternoon drew to a close, "thar isn't a pound ob flour in de house. Shall I go to de village and get some?"

"No; I will go myself."

It was the sudden realization of the unutterable loneliness I would feel without any companion that led me to this rash declaration. The town was only a mile distant, but it would require hours to make the journey there and back, and I could not bear the thought of being without the society of any one for that time. I had read everything in the house; the single horse and cow I owned had been looked after, and there was absolutely nothing to do but to sit down before the scant fire, listen to the sifting of the snow against the window panes, and give way to gloomy reverie.

Anything was preferable to this, and it was with a feeling akin to relief that I added:

"I might do so had I not noticed this afternoon that he had gone lame."

"Better let de flour go, den, for de snow am too deep and de storm to heavy for you to tramp all de way to town and back again."

“No; while I haven’t much fear of our starving, yet, if the snow-fall continues, we shall be in a bad way. I can carry twenty-five pounds without trouble, and will be back in a few hours; then the storm may rage as hard as it pleases, for all we care.”

The preparations were quickly made, and, to shorten my story, I may say that, after a laborious tramp, I reached the village without mishap, bought my quarter of a hundred of flour, slung it over my shoulder, and started on my return.

By this time I had made several disquieting discoveries. The snow was falling faster than ever, the cold was increasing, a gale was blowing, and, under the circumstances, of course there was not a glimmer of light in the sky. My course was directly across the prairie, and in the event of my tracks being obliterated by the snow—as was almost certain to be the case—it was almost impossible for me to prevent myself from going astray.

My hope lay in Jack’s promise that he would keep a bright light burning in the upper story to guide me on my course. On a clear night this light was visible from the village, but somehow or other I failed to take into account the state of the weather. The air was full of eddying flakes, which would render the headlight of a locomotive invisible a hundred yards distant. Strange that this important fact never occurred to me until I was fully a fourth of a mile from the village. Then, after looking in vain for the beacon light, the danger of my situation struck me, and I halted.

“I am certain to go wrong,” I said to myself.

“It is out of my power to follow a direct course without something to serve as a compass. I will go back to the village and wait till morning.”

Wheeling about in my tracks, I resumed my wearisome tramp through the heavy snow, and kept it up until I was certain I had travelled fully a fourth of a mile. Then when I paused a moment and gazed ahead and around, I was confronted by blank darkness on every hand. What a proof of a man’s tendency to go wrong, that in aiming at a village of fifty dwellings, and only a fourth of a mile away, I had missed it altogether!

This discovery gave me my first thrill of real alarm. I shouted, but my voice fell dead in the snowy air. The gale was blowing more furiously than ever, and the cold was so intense that it penetrated my thick clothing and caused my teeth to rattle together!

“You can be of no use to me,” I exclaimed, flinging away the small bag of flour. “The village can’t be far off, and I will find it.”

Determined to retain my self-possession, I made a careful calculation of the proper course to follow, and plunged into my work with more vigor than ever. I continually glanced up in quest of the flickering lights, and listened, in the hope of hearing some sound that could guide me, but nothing of the kind was seen or heard, and it was not long before the terrible truth burst upon me that I was lost.

Aye, and lost in a blizzard! The wind had risen almost to a hurricane; the cold cut through the thickest clothing, and the snow struck my face like the prick of millions of needles. I shouted again, but, convinced that it was a useless waste of strength, I soon ceased.

It was certain death to remain motionless, and almost equally fatal to push on; but there *was* a possibility that I might strike the right direction, and anything was preferable to remaining idle. And so, with a desperation akin to despair, I threw all the vigor at my command into my benumbed limbs, and bent every possible energy to the life and death task before me.

The sleet drove against my cheeks with such spiteful and penetrating fierceness that I could make no use of my eyes, I could only bend my head to the blast and labor through the snow, praying that Providence would guide my footsteps in the right direction.

I was plodding forward in this heavy, aimless fashion when I noticed that the violence of the gale was drifting the snow. Sometimes I would strike a space of several yards where it did not reach to my ankles. Then I would suddenly lurch into a wall that reached to my shoulders. After wallowing through this, I might strike a shallow portion again, where, while walking quite briskly, a windrow of snow would be hurled against my breast and face with such fury as to force me backward and off my feet.

Bracing myself, I waited until there was a sufficient lull in the blizzard for me to make some use of my eyes. I blinked and peered toward the different points of the compass, but without catching the first twinkle of light.

“I am lost—lost—” I moaned; “there is no help for me!”

An extraordinary collapse must have come over me, for my senses seemed to forsake me on the instant. I went down in the eddying, blinding snow, and knew no more.

At the moment of giving way I was less than a hundred yards from the easternmost house of the village. My despairing cry was heard, and hospitable hands carried me into the dwelling within a quarter of an hour after losing my consciousness. Intelligent and prompt treatment prevented any serious consequences, but the remembrance of that brief time exposed to the fury of the blizzard will remain with me to my dying day.

THROWING THE RIATA.

The skill shown by cattlemen in throwing the riata or lasso often approaches the marvelous. What is more wonderful than the duel described in the *San Francisco Examiner*, between Mexican vaqueros, in which the only weapons used were their riatas? The victor overcame the other by throwing his noose, so that his enemy’s noose passed right through it, and the conqueror lassoed the other man’s arms against his side and jerked him from his steed.

The despatch then went on to tell of the skill of the victorious riata man, and mentioned among other wonderful feats, his lassoing an antelope running at high speed 100 feet away. To make the test more extraordinary, the correspondent wrote that he would pick out one of the animal’s feet and get the noose around that alone.

An *Examiner* reporter called on Louis Ohnimus, Superintendent of Woodward’s Gardens, who wielded a riata for many years, and probably knows as much about throwing the lasso as any man on the coast, and asked him if the feats referred to were possible.

“The Mexican may have won the duel by lassoing his adversary, riata and all,” was the answer. “It is not an uncommon thing for them to settle their differences by such a fight, and I have heard of the trick of ringing the other man’s rope, but if that man can catch an antelope one hundred feet away, by the foot or any other way, he is a better riata man than I ever encountered. In the first place mighty few men are strong enough to throw a rope such a distance. Then an ordinary riata is only fourteen or sixteen yards long—twenty yards is a very long one. So, you see, a forty-foot throw is a pretty good one.”

He was asked to explain how to throw a lasso, and consented to do so.

“The first thing about this business,” said Mr. Ohnimus, “is to have a perfect riata. If you have one perfectly stretched, oiled, and in a thoroughly good condition, you can throw well; if your rope is kinky or uneven, you will find it impossible to do accurate work.”

“What do you consider a good riata?”

“Well, I can only tell you how a good one is made. First, the rawhide is cut in thin strips, as long as possible, and half tanned with the hair on. Then these strips are soaked and stretched over a block. Then they are braided into a rope, care being taken, of course, to pull the strands as tight as possible. When the riata is made it should be buried for a week, ten days, or even a fortnight, in the sand. It takes up moisture from the ground, without getting hard. Soaking it in water won’t do, nor will anything else that I know of except, as I say, burying it. When the riata is resurrected it should again be left for a time stretched over a block, with a weight to hold it taut. Then the hair should be sandpapered off the outside, and when the riata is greased with mutton tallow and properly noosed it is ready for use. Every vaquero that pretends to take care of his apparatus will bury his riata and stretch it every six or eight months.

"A hair rope does not make a good riata. It is useful to stretch around camp at night to keep snakes away. For some reason snakes will not cross a hair rope.

"Now, as to throwing it:

"The riata, say, is hanging from the horn of the saddle—not tied, but ready for use. No vaquero who understands his trade ties his rope to his saddle. He knows that his life may depend on his ability to let go of his rope in an instant, and he isn't going to chance killing himself or his horse. You see, the vaquero might be on a side hill, and a bull or steer he wishes to catch be on a trail below him, and the ground between them to be too steep to admit of his riding down to it. Now, suppose the noose, instead of catching around the horns of the steer, should circle his neck and draw down to his shoulders? Accidents are, of course, as likely to happen in catching cattle as in anything else, and give a bull such a hold and he could pull a house, let alone a mustang. That would be one case where it would be very handy to let go quickly. Then a man is likely to get his hand caught, and if he can't let his rope go free he is likely to lose a finger or two.

"Our vaquero is trotting along with his rope hanging at his saddle bow or fastened behind him. He sees a deer or whatever else he wants to catch, and grabs his rope with the left hand if he is a right-handed man, though a man to really excel in this business should be ambi-dextrous. A right-handed man can, under ordinary circumstances, rope a steer; but he has frequently to turn his horse to gain a good position. Now it sometimes happens that your horse is in a position where you can't turn; then it would be awkward, unless you could throw with either hand. I usually throw with my left hand, though I can use either.

"I take up the rope from the saddle bow, so."

He lifted his riata in his right hand. His little finger held the standing end of the rope, the third and middle finders supported the coil, and the noose dangled from his first finger, while his thumb steadied the whole rope and held it from slipping. The coils were not more than a foot or a foot and a half in diameter. The noose was the same size.

"That's a smaller noose than you would use on the range, is it not?"

"No," answered Mr. Ohnimus, "the vaquero never carries his noose long. If he did, it would be constantly getting tangled up in the horse's legs. He makes it larger when he swings it. But to get back to the process of lassoing. As our cowboy gets close to his quarry, he takes the noose in his lasso hand. I will use my left, as it is a trifle handier for me. He grips the rope, not too firmly, holding the standing part and the side of the noose about half the length of the loop away from the knot. That is to enable him to swing the noose so that it will fall open. If he holds it at the knot he will throw a long, narrow noose that is very likely to cross and kink.

“Meanwhile I, representing our cowboy, hold the remaining coils in my other hand, only changing the position of my forefinger so as to secure better control of the coils. Then comes the third maneuver—enlarging the noose. Of course, you have to have a larger noose than one a foot in diameter to drop over a steer’s horns forty feet away. The noose is enlarged by swinging the noose in your lasso hand until the centrifugal force pulls it out the size you wish (this is the reason you do not grasp it too firmly), letting go with the other hand, of course, as many coils as are necessary to make the noose the right size. Now you have the noose in the air you do not cease making it circle around your head until you let it go. When the noose has been let out to the right size the next trouble is to keep it open and to avoid entangling it in the brush or other surrounding obstructions. You keep it open, as I said, by holding the noose from quarter to half its length from the knot, and by a peculiar twist of the wrist that is only attainable by practice. To keep it clear of the brush is often a more difficult job, for the cowboy is not always in a clear place when he wants to throw his rope. Then it is that his judgment comes into play and determines whether his cast is a lost one or not. I have seen vaqueros swing a lasso swiftly almost in the midst of a thicket, and keep it clear without losing speed, and then let it drive straight as an arrow between two close trees and rope an object that could not pass where the noose had gone. Such skill, to be sure, comes only after long practice.

“Well, now we have got the noose circling about the vaquero’s head, and the next thing is to let it fly. There is not much to describe about this part of throwing a riata, important though it may be. It is only incessant practice that will enable a man to make a certain cast. The main thing is to swing the rope just long enough—neither so long as to give it a side-wise motion when you throw it, nor short enough to prevent its getting all the force you require. Then the riata man must throw at a particular limb or projection. This thing of tossing blindly at an object and trusting to luck that the animal will get into the rope somehow will not do. You must pick out your mark as carefully as if you were shooting at it, and then time it. A steer jumping along changes his position constantly as regards you. If you throw at his head high up the chances are that it will be away down when your rope reaches him, and you will overthrow. Now, if you pick out a foot you must reckon so that that foot will be off the ground when your rope reaches him. The noose does not travel like a bullet, and this element of time is most important.

“Of even more importance is it that the distances are gauged correctly. You remember I spoke about holding the coils lightly in two or three fingers. Well, that is done in order that as many coils as may be considered necessary may be let go. If you are wielding a riata you know that each of your coils is almost two feet or two and one half feet long. So if you want to lasso something twenty feet away you let go ten coils.

“As to letting go, you simply open your hand at the correct time and the rope slips off.

“But even after you have roped your steer your work is not over. Almost any animal can pull you from your horse, and to prevent this you must get your rope around the horn of your saddle. There is where you have to be quick. There are two ways of making this hitch that are used ordinarily. The one I prefer is simply to take two turns around the horn, taking care that the second turn comes lower and overlaps the other. No pull in the world could make that rope slip, while I can, simply by throwing off one turn, let it all slide off. This other fashion, which is really taking a ‘half-inch’ around the horn, holds just as fast, but you have to push the rope through to loosen it. You see, in making this sudden twist, a finger is very likely to get caught, and I have known many fingers being taken off before such a hitch could be unfastened.

“It is often advisable to take an extra twist around anything you have lassoed, and this is done by simply throwing a coil. Practice again is the only thing that can teach this.

“Now you have the whole theory of throwing a rope.

“There are four sorts of throws, but they are all made alike, only the position of the arm being different. They are the overthrow, the underthrow, the sidethrow, and the backthrow.”

“Backthrow?”

“Yes, backthrow—catching an object behind you—something that you need not even see. That sounds difficult, does it? Well, you stand behind me and you can see it done.”

The reporter took his station twenty feet behind Mr. Ohnimus, quite out of sight, of course. He swung the loop around his head, and, without turning, let it fly backward. It circled the newspaper man exactly, and by pulling it quickly Ohnimus had his arms pinioned to his side.

“Are there any more trick throws?” asked the reporter.

“Lots of them. I never put myself up as a crack riata man, and I am out of practice now, but I can lay the noose on the ground at my feet and kick it around your neck, or pick it off the ground from my horse and land it around you while the horse is going at full speed, and do lots of things like that, but none of them is any good. That backthrow has been used by the Mexican highwaymen to considerable advantage. You see, in that country the traveler always looks out for danger from the rear and is prepared for it, but when a pleasant horseman rides past him, playing with his riata, and wishing him ‘Good-day’ as he passes, he is likely to consider the danger as gone by, as well as the man. That has caused the death of a good many. The bandit gets the right distance ahead and then lassoes him as I did you. A touch of his spur jerks his victim from the saddle and that ends it.”

“How is the lasso as a weapon of defence?”

“Good. A quick riata man can beat a fellow with a pistol at fairly close quarters.”

“How?”

“Well, here is a pistol. Put it in your pocket and draw it on me as I come toward you.”

The reporter did as he was directed. He had not raised the weapon when the noose was around his hand and the pistol was jerked a dozen feet.

“Try again, and tighter,” said Ohnimus.

The reporter did so. The pistol was not jerked from his hand this time, but before he could snap it Ohnimus had thrown a coil around his neck and pulled his pistol hand up over his shoulder. In another instant a second coil was around the reporter’s body, and both arms were fastened firmly to his sides. He could not move that pistol an inch. No clearer demonstration of the use of the lasso as a weapon of defence was possible.

“What is the most difficult animal, in your opinion, to catch with the lasso?” was asked.

“A sea lion,” answered the rope thrower. “I have caught them off the southern coast. They go right through a noose. The only way to get them is to throw the rope around his neck and back of one flipper. A hog is hard to catch, too. He pulls his legs out of a noose without half trying, and you can’t hold him by the neck or body. The only way is to get him like the sea lion—back of one foreleg.”

A WATERSPOUT.

Doubtless many of my readers have heard of the dreadful encounters of vessels with waterspouts, when the ship escaped destruction by firing a cannon-ball into the waterspout, thus causing it to break apart.

Now these things are by no means such terrible objects as many believe. No doubt the vessels of the present day are larger and stronger than formerly, and perhaps waterspouts have become smaller. Be as it may, the people who go down to the sea in ships need give themselves no uneasiness about them, for really they amount to little.

The *Slavonia*, of the Hamburg line left Brunshausen, on the Elbe, on February 26 last, under the command of Capt. H. Schmidt. She had only two passengers. The weather was squally and the air full of mist when she reached the outer Banks, 900 miles from New York, shortly after sunrise on Sunday, March 16. The big vessel was heading west by north, when, at 7 o'clock, Second Mate Erichsen, who was on the bridge, saw emerge through the mist on the starboard side of the ship, at the distance of about a thousand feet, a towering column which united sea and sky. The column was in front of the ship to starboard, and was moving in a southeasterly direction, apparently at the rate of eight knots an hour.

Although the Slavonia was running 9 1/2 knots, the column seemed likely to pass in front of the steamship when their paths crossed. Accordingly Erichsen did not try to alter the course of the Slavonia; indeed, he would not have altered it had he known ship and spout were sure to meet, for he had encountered waterspouts before and wasn't afraid of them. All he did—in fact, all he had time to do—was to call Third Mate Lorentzen, also an expert in waterspouts.

On rushed the *Slavonia*, heading west by north: nearer came the waterspout, heading south by east. It soon became evident that the spout could not get by before the *Slavonia* reached it, and it was now too late to slow up—indeed, a collision was manifestly unavoidable from the start. Lorentzen had scarcely reached the bridge when the watery Philistine was upon the Samson. It just hit the steamer's bows on the starboard side, as depicted in the second cut. A rushing noise accompanied the column, and the water foamed in its wake. Immediately above was a great black cloud from which clouds less dark descended to form a funnel, or inverted cone. The middle of the column was white, apparently because it contained snow.

The column's narrowest diameter was about twelve feet, while it was three times as broad as its base, which reproduced in water and inverted the cloud-formed funnel above. The whole column rotated with a spiral motion.

The waterspout, when it approached, took all the wind out of the fore-staysail of the steamship, which went blind, but the schooner-sail still kept full, and presently the fore-staysail filled again.

The Slavonia shook under the shock caused by contact with the column of water, but kept on her course none the worse for the collision. A few flakes of snow on her bow were the only evidence of the collision after the pillar of water had passed off to port.

While the vessel was uninjured, the waterspout soon showed signs that it had received its death-blow. As it sailed off to the southeast it parted in the middle, and the cone of water which formed its base and the cone of cloud which formed its top began to grow smaller by degrees. The waterspout was slowly but surely ceasing to be a waterspout when it disappeared from view in the misty distance some fifteen minutes or more from the time it was sighted.

The *Slavonia's* encounter with the waterspout took place in latitude 42 degrees 22 minutes north and longitude 52 degrees 35 minutes west. This is rather far north for waterspouts so early in the year. The waterspout crop is generally more plentiful when thunder and lightning are on top, which is in warmer weather. The temperature of the air at the time of the encounter was 37 degrees; water 54 degrees. It had been cold during the night, but grew warmer in the morning. The clouds which overspread the firmament were of the cumulus pattern.

Erichsen and Lorentzen have not only seen other waterspouts, but the first, when on a sailing vessel in the tropics, ran into the very middle of one with no worse result than to deluge the deck of the ship with water as a heavy shower would have done. He thinks an unusually large waterspout might possibly sink a very small vessel, say a pilot boat, but with a ship of ordinary size he considers bombarding a waterspout with cannon a waste of powder.

AN HEROIC WOMAN.

Every boy and girl should learn to swim. When one recalls how easily the art is acquired, and the many occasions that are liable to arise, we cannot but wonder that the accomplishment is so universally neglected by the other sex. It is pleasant to note, however, that swimming is growing to be popular among women, and the day is not far distant, when the majority of young ladies will become the rivals of their brothers in their ability to keep their heads above water.

Torres Strait separates Australia from Papua or New Guinea; and connects the Arafura Sea on the west, with the Coral Sea on the east. Its current is swift and the waters from time immemorial have been dangerous to navigation. It has been the scene of many shipwrecks, and it is only a few months since that the steamer *Quetta* was lost in those waters. One hundred and sixteen persons perished on that terrible night in the South Pacific, but among the survivors was Miss Lacy, whose experience was not only among the most interesting and thrilling ever recorded, but emphasizes the statement we have made at the opening of our sketch.

Miss Lacy says she was sitting in the saloon, engaged in writing a letter, the other ladies practicing for a concert which it was intended to give on shipboard. Everything was going along, merrily, and all were in high spirits, when, without the least warning, they were startled by a harsh, grating noise, the steamer rocked violently, and nearly every one was thrown into the wildest panic.

The confusion and shouts above showed that some fearful disaster had occurred. Instantly Miss Lacy made a rush for the deck to learn what it meant. Quick as were her movements, she found the ship was already sinking. Going aft was like climbing a steep hill, but she saw that one portion was high above water, and she struggled bravely to reach it. But, so rapidly did the *Quetta* go down that she had hardly gone forward, when the steamer was swallowed up in the furious waters.

That which followed is beyond description. In an instant, two hundred human beings were struggling frantically, shrieking in their terror for the help which was nowhere to be found, clutching each other, praying and drowning by the score.

Miss Lacy was caught in this fearful swirl, and was in imminent danger of being dragged down by those around her, who were crazed by the one wild, despairing hope of saving themselves, no matter at what cost. But she was a powerful swimmer, and retaining her self-command, she shook herself free of several who attempted to cling to her. The whirlpool caused by the sinking of the steamer pulled her beneath the water, but, with the same wonderful presence of mind she had shown from the first, she fought her way to the surface, and swam from the dangerous spot.

Finding herself her own mistress, and fully aware that her life now depended on her ability to swim, she removed all her superfluous clothing and moved hither and thither in the darkness, in the hope of coming upon some of the survivors.

It was about midnight, that she heard some one shout. The gloom was too powerful for her to distinguish anything, but she swam toward the point, whence the call issued, and came upon a raft, that had been hastily thrown together by the chief officer of the *Quetta*. Several persons were clinging to it, and she accepted the invitation to avail herself of the temporary refuge and give her weary limbs a rest.

The dismal hours wore slowly away, and at last the growing light in the eastern sky told that the longed-for day was breaking. As soon as the rays of the sun illumined the wild waste of waters, every eye scanned the ocean in quest of some sail; but on every side was the vast heavy sea, with no sign of life except on the little raft. It was water, water everywhere, with not a drop to drink nor a morsel of food to eat, and with no prospect of escaping a lingering death of the most distressing nature.

The discouraging feature of the situation to Miss Lacy was that their rude support was making no progress at all. They had no means of propelling it, and, had they possessed such means, no one knew what course to follow. It looked as if days and nights must be passed on the raft, until one by one the survivors succumbed or ended their sufferings by plunging into the sea which they had striven so hard to escape.

Far away, however, on the verge of the horizon, an object rose dimly to view, which, after carefully studying for some time, the shipwrecked people agreed was a small island, but, as we have stated, they were powerless to propel their craft thither, and could only gaze and sigh for the refuge that was as much beyond their reach, as though it were a thousand leagues distant.

“I am going to swim to it!” exclaimed Miss Lacy.

“Are you mad?” demanded the astonished chief-officer; “it is utterly impossible.”

“I prefer to risk it rather than remain here.”

“But it is much further off than it seems to be; these waters are full of sharks and you will never live to swim half the distance. Dismiss the idea at once.”

“Good-by!”

And the brave woman took a header into the sea, and with a long graceful stroke, that compelled the admiration of every one of the amazed survivors, began swimming toward the supposed refuge.

But the chief-officer knew more about the difficulties in her way than she did. She grievously miscalculated the distance, and, though she was a swimmer of amazing skill and endurance, she began to believe she had undertaken a task beyond her power of accomplishment.

She swam directly toward the island, husbanding her strength like a wise person, but making steady progress, until before the afternoon was half gone, she knew she had placed many a long mile behind her. When she looked back she could see nothing of the raft and her friends, but as she rose on the crest of an immense swell, she plainly discerned the island. It still was in the verge of the horizon, and it was hard for her to see that she was apparently no nearer to it than when she started.

Besides this alarming fact, she was threatened by a still greater peril. As the chief-officer had warned her, the waters abounded with sharks, of the man-eating species, who were liable to dart forward and seize her at any moment; but, in recalling her extraordinary experience, Miss Lacy says that at no time did she feel any fear of them. She knew they were liable to discover her at any moment, but they did not, and fortunately indeed she escaped their ferocious jaws.

Her greatest suffering was from the blazing sun, whose rays shot downward upon her head with pitiless power. When she found her brain growing dizzy, she averted the danger of sunstroke by dropping or swimming for some distance below the surface. This always cooled or refreshed her, though she felt her face and neck blistering under the fierce rays.

In striving to recall her experience, Miss Lacy is unable to remember a large portion of the time she spent in the water. She believes she slept for several hours. What an extraordinary situation! Alone in the midst of the vast strait in the southern Pacific, surrounded by sharks, with no friendly sail in sight, and yet slumbering and unconscious.

Of course she was not swimming all this time. When she found herself growing weary, she floated on her back for long periods, then propelled herself first upon one side and then upon the other, and all the time the dim misty object in the distance remained as far away as ever. Finally, when she raised her head and looked for it, she was dismayed at being unable to detect it at all. It had vanished.

Then she knew that it had been an optical delusion from the first. There was no island or land in sight. She was alone on the vast deep.

But the heroic woman did not despair. After she had been in the water twenty hours altogether, and was in the last stage of exhaustion, she was picked up by a boat belonging to the search steamer *Albatross*. For several hours succeeding her rescue she was delirious, but it was not long before she was entirely herself, having given a signal proof of the value of swimming as a lady’s accomplishment.

THE WRITING FOUND IN A BOTTLE.

Let me assure the readers, at the beginning of this sketch, that it is strictly true in every particular. I have no ambition to shine as a writer of fiction, and, at the request of a number of friends acquainted with the remarkable circumstances, have sat down to relate, in a straightforward manner as is at my command; the part that I took in the history of the famous *Buried Treasure*.

Not the least singular part of this strange business was that, of the three individuals concerned two were boys, one being my son Frank (named for his father) and a playmate, Arthur Newman. The latter was thirteen years old, while Frank was only a few months his senior.

They were inseparable playmates from early childhood; and as we lived near a broad, deep inlet, which put in from the Atlantic, they learned to swim at the age of ten, and soon learned to manage a yacht as well as veterans. I was sometimes anxious because of their venturesome disposition, but although they frequently ventured outside, sometimes in very nasty weather, no accident ever befell them, and the parents of both boys gradually learned to dismiss all fear concerning them, under the belief that, as they grew older, they became better fitted to take care of themselves.

One day in March Frank told me that a suspicious brig had been standing off shore for the better part of a week, and he and Arthur had come to the conclusion that it was a pirate. I laughed heartily at their fancy, and assured them that the days of buccaneers and sea rovers were long since past, and they must dismiss all such absurd ideas from their minds.

The following week the Atlantic sea-board was devastated by one of the fiercest storms that had been known for years. Reports of wrecks and disasters to shipping reached us for several days after, and Frank remarked one evening at supper that he believed his suspected pirate was one of the unfortunate vessels that had gone down with all on board. I smiled at his words, but when I learned that the beach was strewn with wreckage, and that a great deal of it had washed into the inlet, I thought it probable that he was right, so far as the fate of the strange ship was concerned.

It was near the close of the month that my boy brought home a tightly corked bottle, which he and Arthur had found while cruising in the inlet. When he said that there was a piece of rolled paper inside, I felt enough curiosity to withdraw the stopper with the aid of a strong corkscrew, and to make an examination.

Sure enough there was a small roll of thick, vellum-like paper, on which, in a cramped hand, evidently written years before, was the following:

“*Three feet under the Beacon Tree*.”

For a minute or two I was puzzled, and then, as if by inspiration, the whole truth burst upon me.

The Beacon Tree was the name of an immense poplar that stood near the mouth of the inlet. The fish-hawks had builded their nests in the forked tops for a half century. I remember hearing my father say it was struck by lightning long before and although its upper branches were shattered, and it had been as dead as a fence-post ever since, yet its immense size, great height, and peculiar, silver-like appearance caused it to become a prominent landmark to the vessels when approaching the coast, and long before I was born it gained the name of the Beacon Tree, by which title it was known to unnumbered hundreds of sailors and sea-faring men.

“There is a treasure buried under that tree,” I said to Frank, suppressing my excitement so far as I could. “More than likely it was placed there by some freebooter a long time ago, and these people were awaiting a chance to dig it up.”

“Maybe Captain Kidd buried it,” suggested the boy.

“Possibly he did, for there is reason to believe that he hid a great deal of treasure along the Atlantic coast. Now, since Arthur was with you when you found this bottle, he has the same claim to the treasure that you have. We will not say anything to his father, and you must take particular care not to give a hint to a living soul. Go over and tell Arthur to come here this evening. I will furnish the shovels and lantern, and when we are sure that no one will see us, we will slip over to the Beacon Tree and dig.”

I recall that I was never so absolutely sure of anything in my life as I was that valuable treasure lay buried under the old poplar. My wife, to whom I showed the little roll of paper, expressed a doubt, and smilingly hinted that perhaps I was too much impressed by that brilliant sketch of Edgar A. Poe called “The Gold Bug.”

“Of course,” I answered, “disappointment may await us, and I know these bottles picked up at sea are frequently frauds; but the age of the writing and the peculiar circumstances convince me that this is genuine. I am sure *something* will be found under the Beacon Tree.”

Meantime Frank had hurried off to acquaint Arthur with the amazing discovery, and to warn him against dropping a hint to any one. My son soon returned with the word that his friend was “b’iling” with excitement, but alas! his parents were going to spend that evening with a neighbor, and since they would not be back until late, there was no possible way of his joining us.

The boys were not more disappointed than I, and the impulse was strong upon me to make the venture without the help of Arthur, meaning, of course that such a proceeding should not affect his share in the find; but it did not strike me that that would be exactly right, and Arthur was informed that we three would attend to the business the following evening.

I could not avoid strolling out to the Beacon Tree the next day. I did so in the most off-hand manner and with the most unconcerned expression I could assume; but had any one scrutinized my countenance, I am sure he would easily have detected the deep agitation under which I was laboring.

I was considerably disturbed, upon examining the immediate surroundings of the tree, to discover signs which looked as if some one had been digging there quite recently.

"The secret has become known and the treasure has been carried off," I gasped, with a rapidly throbbing heart.

Reflection, however, reassured me. No one had seen the writing in the bottle beside myself (though evidently it must have been known to others), and it was certain that if any person had succeeded in unearthing the hidden wealth, he would not have taken the trouble to hide all signs with such extreme care. Closer examination, too, convinced me there had been no digging about the tree at all. And yet I was mistaken.

We three reached the old poplar the next evening between ten and eleven o'clock. Arthur had escaped inquiry by slipping out of his bedroom window after bidding his parents good-night; and, inasmuch as the lantern which I carried was not lit until we arrived at the tree, we were confident of escaping attention. Still I watched sharply, and was greatly relieved to discover no persons abroad at that hour beside ourselves.

Since the treasure was located but three feet below the surface, in sandy soil, I brought only one shovel, while the boys watched me, one holding the lantern, and both casting furtive glances around to guard against eavesdroppers. It would be useless to deny my excitement. My heart at times throbbed painfully, and more than once I was on the point of ceasing until I could regain mastery of myself.

"Pop, you must be nearly deep enough," said Frank, in a guarded undertone.

"I'm pretty near to the place," I replied stopping a minute to draw my handkerchief across my perspiring forehead.

"I'm afraid there's somebody watching us," added Arthur.

"Where?" I asked in affright, staring around in the gloom.

"I thought I saw a man moving out yonder."

"Well, it's too late for him to interfere now," I said, compressing my lips and renewing my digging more determinedly than ever; "I carry a revolver with me, and I don't mean to be robbed."

The next moment my heart gave a great throb, for the shovel struck something hard.

"Hold the lantern down here, Frank, quick!" I commanded in a hoarse voice.

He obeyed, but to my disappointment the object proved to be a large stone.

"I guess it's under that," I whispered, stopping work for a moment.

"Pop, there's another piece of paper," said Frank.

I stooped over and picked it up. I saw that there was writing on it, and holding it up beside the lantern read:

“Dig three feet under the Beacon Tree and you will be an April fool.”

Once again the truth flashed across me. The whole thing was a practical joke.

“Boys,” said I, “what day of the month is this?”

They reflected a moment and answered:

“Why, it’s the first of April.”

“Let’s go home,” I added, stepping out of the excavation, “and here’s a half a dollar apiece if you don’t tell anybody about it.”

As we moved mournfully away I was sure I heard a chuckling laugh somewhere near in the darkness, but the author of it was prudent enough to keep beyond reach.

It was not until three months afterward that I learned all the facts connected with the writing found in a bottle. My neighbor, the father of Arthur Newman, on whom I had played several jokes, adopted this means of retaliating on me. He took my son and his own into his confidence, and I am grieved to say that the young rascals were just as eager as he. When I proposed to make the search on the last day of March, my friend resorted to the subterfuge I have mentioned, so as to insure that it should not take place until the following evening, which was unquestionably appropriate for my first and last essay in digging for buried treasure.

THAT HORNET’S NEST.

There was an indignation meeting of the boys at Bushville school, one sultry day in August. From stress of circumstances it was held at the noon recess, in the piece of woods back of the old stone building, and on the banks of the crystal stream in which the youngsters swam and revelled at morning, noon and night, during the long, delicious days of summer.

All the lads, not quite a score, belonging to the Bushville school, were present at the impromptu convention, but the proceedings were chiefly in charge of the lads, Tom Britt, Dick Culver and Fred Armstrong. There were but a few months’ difference in their ages, none of which was more than fourteen years, but all were so much larger and older than the rest that they were looked up to as leaders in everything except study.

It cannot be denied that the three were indolent by nature, inclined to rebel at authority, and their enforced attendance at school was the affliction of their lives. They had given their teachers no end of trouble, and more than once had combined in open rebellion against their instructors. Tom’s father was a trustee, and like the parents of many ill-trained youths, including those of Dick and Fred, he could see nothing wrong in the conduct of his son. As a consequence, discipline at times was set at naught in the Bushville institutions, and one of the best teachers ever employed by the district threw up his situation in disgust, and went off without waiting to collect his month’s salary.

The successor of this gentleman was Mr. Lathrop, a young man barely turned twenty, with a beardless face, a mild blue eye, a gentle voice, and such a soft winning manner that the three leaders gave an involuntary sniff of contempt when they first saw him and agreed that he would not last more than a week at the most.

“We’ll let up on him, for a few days,” Tom explained to some of his friends, “so as to give him time to get acquainted. I b’lieve in letting every fellow have a show, but he’s got to walk mighty straight between now and the end of this week,” added the youth impressively; “I ain’t in favor of standing any nonsense.”

A nodding of heads by Dick and Fred showed that Tom had voiced their sentiments.

But, somehow or other, Mr. Lathrop was different from the teachers that had preceded him. He never spoke angrily or shouted, and his first act on entering the schoolroom was to break up the long tough hickory “gad” lying on his desk and to fling it out of the window. The next thing he did, after calling the school to order, was to tell the gaping, open-eyed children the most entertaining story to which they had ever listened. The anecdote had its moral too, for woven in and out and through its charming meshes was the woof of a life of heroic suffering, of trial and reward.

At its conclusion, the teacher said to the pupils that if they were studious and transgressed no rules, he would be glad to tell them another story the next day, if they would remain a few minutes after the hour of dismissal. The treat was such a rare one that all the girls and most of the boys resolved to earn the right to enjoy it.

"I'm going to hear the yarn, too," muttered Tom Britt, "for he knows how to tell 'em, but as for behaving myself that depends."

On the following afternoon, when five o'clock arrived (in those days most of the country schools opened at eight and closed at five, with an hour at noon, and not more than two weeks vacation in summer. I have attended school on more than one Saturday, Fourth of July and Christmas), the school was all expectation. When Mr. Lathrop saw the bright eyes turned eagerly toward him, a thrill of pleasure stirred his heart, for he felt that his was the hand to sow good seed, or this was the soil where it could be made to spring up and bear fruit a hundred fold.

"I am glad," said he, in his winning voice, "to know that you have done well and earned the right to hear the best story that I can tell. You have been studious, obedient and careful to break no rules, and I am sure that as we become better acquainted, we shall like each other and get on well together.

"I wish I could say you had *all* done well, but it grieves me to tell you, what you know, that one boy has neglected his lessons, been tardy or so indifferent to my wishes that it would not be right that he should be allowed to sit with the rest of you and listen to the incident I am about to relate. I refer to Thomas Britt. Thomas, you will please take your books and hat and go home."

The words came like a thunderclap. No one expected it, least of all the youth himself. Every eye was turned toward him and his face flushed scarlet. He quickly rallied from the daze into which he was thrown at first, and with his old swagger, looked at the teacher and replied with an insolence that was defiance itself:

"My father is trustee, and I've as much right here as you or any one else, and I'm going to stay till I'm ready to go home and you can't——" but, before he had completed his defiant sentence, the slightly built teacher was at his side and had grasped the nape of his coat. It seemed to the lad, that an iron vise had caught his garment and a span of horses were pulling at him. He clutched desperately at everything within reach and spread his legs apart and curled up his toes in the effort to hook into something that would stay proceedings, but it was in vain. Out he came from the seat, and to the awed children who were looking on it seemed that his body was elongated to double its length during the process,—and he was run through the open door, and his hat tossed after him. Then the teacher walked quietly back to his seat behind the desk on the platform, and without the slightest sign of flurry or mental disturbance, he told one of the sweetest and most delightful incidents to which his pupils had ever listened. He closed with the promise to give them another at the end of the week, if they continued in the good course on which they were so fairly started.

“He catched me foul,” explained the indignant Tom Britt the following day in discussing his hurried exit from the schoolroom; “if he had only let me know he was coming, it would be him that dove out the door instead of me.”

The sullen youth did not receive much sympathy at first, for Mr. Lathrop was steadily winning the affections of the pupils; but Dick and Fred rebelled at such quiet submission to authority, and acted so sullenly that they, too, were shut out from the privilege of listening to the next story related by the teacher to the rest of the school. It had been agreed among the three boys that they should refuse to depart when ordered to do so by the instructor, and that when he made a move toward them, they would assail him simultaneously and rout him “horse, foot and dragoons.”

But the business was conducted with such a cyclone rush that the plan of campaign was entirely overturned. Before the rebels could combine, all three were out doors, so shaken up that they agreed that a new system of resistance would have to be adopted.

And thus it came about that at the noon recess, one day of the following week, the boys of Bushville school gathered in the cool shade of the woods to listen to the plan of the three malcontents for destroying the authority of the school. It was mainly curiosity on the part of the younger portion, who had little sympathy with the motives of the leaders and were quite sure they would meet with failure.

“I’ve made up my mind that I won’t stand it,” announced Tom, after the situation had been freely discussed; “no boy with any spirit will allow a teacher to run him out of school in the style he served me.”

“What then made you let him do it?” asked little freckled-face Will Horton, from where he lay on the ground.

“Didn’t I tell you he catched me foul?” demanded Tom, glaring at the urchin; “if I’d knowed what was coming things would have been different.”

“Dick and Fred knowed he was coming for *them*,” added Will, “for he walked clear across the schoolroom.”

“You’ve got too much to say,” retorted Dick Culver, angrily; “when we want your advice we’ll ask for it.”

“Well, boys, you had better make up your minds to behave yourselves and then there won’t be any trouble,” was the sensible advice of Jimmy Thompson, who had perched himself on a log, and was swinging his bare feet back and forth; “Mr. Lathrop is the best teacher we ever had and he suits the rest of us first rate.”

“Of course he suits all boys that ha’n’t any spirit,” was the crushing response of the leader, “but I’ve a plan that’ll teach him that me and Dick and Fred ain’t that kind of chaps.”

“How are you going to help yourself?”

After several mysterious hints and nods of the head, Tom revealed his stupendous scheme for bringing the teacher to terms.

“You know the big hornet’s nest over in Bear Hollow?”

Inasmuch as there wasn’t a boy in the crowd who hadn’t shied stones at the object named (always without hitting it), no further information was necessary.

“Well, I’m going to put that nest in the teacher’s desk, and when he comes in, takes his seat and raises the lid, won’t there be music?”

The scheme was so prodigious that for a full half minute all stared open mouthed at their leader without speaking.

“The teacher never locks his desk at noon, so it will be easy enough to slip it in before he gets back.”

“But when he opens the desk and the hornets sail out, what will become of *us*?” was the pertinent inquiry of Will Horton.

“Why the minute the things begin to swarm out I’ll yell, and we’ll all rush out doors.”

“Won’t the teacher do the same thing?”

“But he’ll be the last and he’ll catch it the worst. He’ll be right among the critters, and they’ll just go for him, so his head will swell up like a bushel basket and we’ll have a week’s vacation. By that time he’ll learn how to treat us fellers.”

“*I* am,” was the proud reply; “come on and I’ll show you.”

As he spoke, Tom sprang to his feet and started on a trot toward Bear Hollow, with the others streaming after him.

It cannot be denied that the youth displayed considerable pluck and coolness when he came to the test. There hung the hornet’s nest from the lower limb of an oak, so near the ground that it could be easily reached by one of the larger boys. It was gray in color and of enormous size. It resembled in shape an overgrown football or watermelon, pendant by one end. In some portions faint ridges were visible, like the prints left by tiny wavelets on the sand. Near the base was a circular opening about as large as an old-fashioned penny. This was the door of the hornets’ residence, through which all the occupants came and went.

The boys halted at a safe distance, and even Tom paused a few minutes to make a reconnoissance before going nearer.

“You fellows stay here, and don’t any of you throw stones or yell!” he said, in a guarded undertone; “for if them hornets find out what is up, they’ll come swarming out by the million and sting us all to death.”

The promise was readily made, and Tom went forward like a hero, the eyes of all of his playmates fixed upon him. It was noticed be carried a large silken handkerchief in his hand—one that he had secured at home for this special purpose.

He advanced stealthily until within some ten feet, when he halted again. With his gaze centered on the gray, oblong object, he saw one of the dark insects suddenly crawl to view through the opening.

"I wonder if he suspects anything," thought Tom, half disposed to turn about and run; "no—he's all right," he added, as the hornet spread his wings, and shot off like a bullet through the air.

Still intently watching the orifice, the boy moved softly forward until directly under the nest. Then, with the deliberation of a veteran, he deftly enfolded it with the large silk handkerchief, easily wrenched it loose from its support, tied the covering over the top so securely that not an inhabitant of the nest could possibly escape, and rejoined in triumph his companions.

"Now you'll see fun!" he exclaimed, as he led the whole party trooping in the direction of the schoolhouse; "keep mum, and don't tell any of the girls what's up."

It was a grand scheme and it looked as if there could be no hitch in it. What compunctions the other boys might have felt against the attempt to cause pain to their teacher were forgotten in the excitement of the coming sport.

The residents of the oblong home must have been surprised, to put it mildly, when they found the house swinging along, in the grasp of some great giant, themselves enveloped in gloom, and the only avenue of escape sealed up. They hummed, and buzzed and raised a tempest within, but it was in vain: they were prisoners and must remain such until the ogre chose to release them.

Everything seemed to join to help the young rebel. The girls were playing so far from the school building, that they gave no heed to the procession which passed into the structure. One glance told Tom that it was without an occupant, and he strode hastily to the desk, the others pausing near the door, ready to dash out in the event of disaster.

The desk was unlocked and Tom raised the lid. The nest was laid on its side, in the middle, but it was so big that he had to displace several books to make room for it. Then the knots were untied, the handkerchief flirted free, the lid lowered, and the deed was done.

Tom joined his companions with a radiant face. "Not a word," he cautioned, "be extra good this afternoon; even I'll try to behave myself for once, but we won't have to wait long."

"S'posin' them hornets lift the lid of the desk and come out before the teacher gets here?" suggested Will Horton.

"What are you talking about?" was the scornful question of Dick Culver; "how can a hornet raise the lid of a desk?"

"I don't mean that *one* will do it, but, if they all join together and put their shoulders to it, they'll lift more than you think."

But this contingency was too vague to be feared. A quarter of an hour later, Mr. Lathrop entered the building with his brisk step, bidding such children as he met a pleasant good afternoon, and hanging his hat on the peg in the wall behind his desk, rang the bell for the children to assemble, and took his seat in his chair on the platform.

The observant instructor quickly saw that something unusual was in the wind. There was a score of signs that he detected in the course of a few minutes, but he could have no idea what it all meant. He was on the alert, however, and did not remain long in suspense.

The first hint was the sound of loud and angry buzzing within his desk. While wondering what it meant, and in doubt whether to investigate, he observed a hornet emerging through the key-hole. Before it could shake itself free, he shoved him back with his key, which was inserted and turned about, so effectually blocking the opening, that the insects were held secure.

The teacher read the whole story, and it needed only a brief study of Tom Britt's actions to make sure that he was the guilty one.

Much to the disappointment of the boys, Mr. Lathrop seemed to find no occasion for opening his desk. It remained closed through the whole afternoon and, when the moment for dismissal arrived, the only one to remain was Tom Britt, who, while conducting himself fairly well, had made a bad failure with every recitation. His mind seemed to be too pre-occupied with some other matter to absorb book knowledge.

The boys loitered around the playground, waiting to see the end of it all. Tom sat with his hands supporting his head, and his elbow on the desk, morose, sullen and disappointed.

"I wonder if he suspects anything," he muttered; "I don't see how he can, for nobody told him. It's queer he has never opened his desk all the afternoon. I never knew him to do anything like that before—Gracious alive!"

Just then Tom felt as if some one had jabbed a burning needle into his neck. Almost at the same instant came a similar dagger thrust on the top of his head, where he always wore his hair short. Uttering a gasp of affright, he leaped from his seat, with a score of fierce hornets buzzing about his ears. The terrified glance around the room showed that the teacher had slipped noiselessly out of the door, but, before doing so, he had raised the lid of his desk to its fullest extent.

The next moment Tom bounded through the door, striking at the insects that were doing painful execution about the exposed parts of his body. It was not until after a long run that he was entirely freed of them and was able to take an inventory of his wounds.

It was a lesson the lad never forgot. In the final contest between him and his teacher, he was conquered and he admitted it. Mr. Lathrop made a study of his character, and having proven himself physically his master, set out to acquire the moral conquest that was needed to complete the work. It need hardly be added that he succeeded, for he was a thoughtful, conscientious instructor of youth, who loved his work, and who toiled as one who knows that he must render an account of his stewardship to Him who is not only loving and merciful, but just.

A YOUNG HERO.

Reuben Johnson leaned on his hoe, and, looking up at the sun, wondered whether, as in the Biblical story, it had not been stationary for several hours. He was sure it was never so long in descending to the horizon.

“Wake up, Rube,” sharply called his Uncle Peter, smartly hoeing another row a few paces behind him, “doan be idlin’ your time; de sun am foah hours high yit.”

The nephew started and raised his implement, but stopped. He was staring at the corner of the fence just ahead, where sat the jug of cold water, with the Revolutionary musket leaning against the rails. The crows were so annoying that the double-loaded weapon was kept ready to be used against the pests when they ventured too near.

“See dar, uncle!” said Rube in a scared voice. The old man also ceased work, adjusted his iron-rimmed spectacles, and looked toward the fence.

Within a few feet of where the flint lock musket inclined against the rails, a yellow dog was trying to push his way through. Watching his efforts for a few minutes, the elder said:

“Rube, I wish we had de gun; dat dog ain’t peaceable.”

“He am mad; dis ain’t de place fur us.”

“Slip down to de fence and got de gun; dat’s a good boy!”

“Gracious!” gasped the youth; “it am right dar by de dog.”

“He won’t notice you; run behind him and be quick ’bout it, or he’ll chaw us bofe to def.”

“He’ll chaw *me* suah if I goes near him,” was the reply of Rube, who felt little ardor for the task his relative urged upon him.

“Ain’t it better dat *one* ob us should go dead, dan bofe should be obstinguished?” asked the uncle reproachfully.

“Dat ’pends which am de one to go dead; if it am *me*, it am better for *you*, but I don’t see whar *I’m* to come in; ’spose you see wheder you can got de gun—”

“Dar he comes!” whispered Uncle Pete.

Sure enough the cur, having twisted his body between the rails, began trotting toward the couple that were watching him with such interest.

There was good reason for fear, since the canine was afflicted with the rabies in the worst form. He showed no froth at the jaws, for animals thus affected do not, but his eyes were fiery, his mouth dry, the consuming fever burning up all moisture. He moaned as if in pain, his torture causing him to snap at everything in reach. He had bitten shrubbery, branches, wood and other objects, and now made for the persons with the purpose of using his teeth on them.

“Rube,” said his uncle, “stand right whar you am! No use ob runnin’, for he’ll cotch you; when he gets nigh ’nough bang him wid your hoe; if dat don’t fotch him, I’ll gib him anoder whack and dat’ll finish him suah.”

Fate seemed to have ordered that the younger person should hold the van in the peril, though he was tempted to take his place by his relative, so that the attack of the dog should be met by both at the same instant. This promised to be effective, but the time was too brief to permit any plan of campaign.

The brute was already within a hundred yards of Rube, who, with his hoe drawn back, as though it were a club, tried to calm his nerves for the struggle. He would have fled, had he not known that that would draw pursuit to himself. He was inclined to urge his uncle to join him in a break for freedom, the two taking diverging routes. Since the canine could not chase both at the same time, such a course was certain to save one, but, inasmuch as the youth was at the front, he knew he must be the victim, and the prospect of a mad dog nipping at his heels, with fangs surcharged with one of the most fearful venoms known, was too terrifying to be borne. He, therefore, braced himself, and, with a certain dignity and courage, held his ground.

A dog suffering from the rabies often shows odd impulses. This one was within fifty feet of Rube, when he turned at right angles and trotted toward the other side of the cornfield.

“*Now’s* your time, chile!” called Uncle Pete; “got de gun quick, and if he comes back we’ll be ready for him.”

It was the first suggestion that struck the nephew favorably, and he acted upon it at once. The dog might change his mind again and return to the attack, in which event no weapon could equal a loaded gun.

As Rube ran with his broad-brimmed hat flapping in his eyes, he kept glancing over his shoulder, to make sure the brute was not following him, while his uncle held his position, with his hoe grasped and his eye fixed on the animal, trotting between the hills of corn. He managed also to note the action of his nephew, who was making good time, and whose progress caused the hearts of the two to heat high with hope.

Had the fence ahead of the dog been open, doubtless he would have soon passed out of sight; but, as if recalling his trouble in entering the field, and possibly seeing his error in leaving two victims, he stopped only an instant in front of the rails, when he turned and came at a swifter gait than before, straight for Uncle Pete.

The latter stared a second or two and then shouted:

“Quick, Rube! he means *me* dis time!” And he dashed off, not to join his nephew, but to reach the side of the field opposite the nose of the animal.

By this time the youth had his hands on the smoothbore musket and his courage came back. He saw his uncle crashing over the hills, the picture of dismay, while the dog rapidly gained on him.

“Hey dar! hey dar!” shouted Rube, breaking into a run and trying to draw attention to himself. But the brute only sped the faster. He was near the middle of the procession, but gaining on the fugitive, who had thrown aside his hoe, flung his hat to the ground, and was making better progress than when he used to run races with the boys in his younger days.

The fence was near and he strained every nerve. It looked as if man and dog would reach it at the same moment, but the former put forth an extra spurt and arrived a pace or two ahead, with the cur at his heels.

Rube, however, was not far to the rear. Seeing the crisis had come, he stopped short, brought the musket to his shoulder, and, taking the best aim he could, let fly with the whole load that clogged several inches of the barrel.

He did not observe at the moment of pressing the trigger that his uncle and the dog were in line, but it could have made no difference, since the shot had to be made at that instant or not at all.

Just as the weapon was fired, Uncle Pete with a great bound cleared the fence, landing on his hands and knees; and, rolling over on his back, kicked the air with such vigor that his shoes flew off, one after the other, as if keeping time with his frenzied outcries.

The yellow cur was scared, as a shark is sometimes driven off by the loud splashing of a swimmer, and, though he leaped the fence, he wheeled again, and, without harming the man, ran down the highway toward the Woodvale school.

For a moment after firing, Rube Johnson believed he was killed. The flint shot a spark among the powder grains, there was a flash, a hiss, and then, as the fire worked its way to the charge inside, the explosion came and he toppled over, half stunned, with the gun flying a dozen feet away.

But his fear for his relative brought him to his feet, and he hurried to the old gentleman, who was climbing uncertainly to an upright posture.

“What’s de matter?” asked Rube; “you ain’t bit.”

“I know dat; I warn’t yellin’ on *dat* ’count.”

“What fur den?”

“You black rascal, you shot me instid ob de yaller dog.”

“Lemme see,” said Rube, turning his uncle round and scanning him from head to foot.

“I done pepper you purty well, uncle, but dare ain’t any ob de slugs dat hit yer—only de fine bird shot.”

“How many ob dem?” was the rueful question.

“I don’t tink dar’s more dan five or six hundred; Aunt Jemimer can gib her spar time de next six weeks pickin’ ’em out; she’ll enj’y it, but dat shot ob mine scared off de mad dog, and yer oughter be tankful to me, uncle, all yer life.”

It was recess at the Woodvale school, and the forty-odd boys and girls were having a merry time on the playgrounds, which included the broad highway. Within the building, Mr. Hobbs, the young teacher was busy “setting copies,” his only companion just then being Tod Clymer, a pale-faced cripple, who, unable to take part in the sports of the other boys, preferred to stay within doors and con his lessons, in which he was always far in advance of the rest.

A strange confusion outside caused him to raise his head and look through the window near him.

“Oh, Mr. Hobbs,” he said, “there’s a mad dog!”

The teacher started up, and saw the yellow cur running about the grounds, snapping at the children, while a couple of boys had already raised the fearful cry, and there was a scattering in all directions. Although without any weapon, the instructor was on the point of hurrying out to the help of the children, when he observed the canine coming toward the outer door. He tried to close it in his face, but the brute was too quick and was inside before he could be stopped. He made for the second door, leading into the session-room, but, in this instance, the teacher slammed it shut just in time.

Instead of going out the dog slunk into the entry and crawled under a bench, so nearly behind the outer door that he was invisible to any one beyond.

“Mr. Hobbs,” said Tod Clymer a moment later, “will you please help me out of the window?”

“I think you are safer here,” replied the teacher, “for he cannot reach you, but you will not be able to get away from him outside.”

“I want to leave, please, very much.”

It was a strange request, and the teacher waited some minutes before complying, but the heart of the lame boy was so set upon it, that he finally assisted him to the window furthest from where the dog was crouching, gently lifted him down to the ground, and then passed his crutches to him.

“Now, Tod,” said he kindly, “don’t tarry a moment, for there’s no saying how soon he will be outside again. The other children are away, but you cannot run like them.”

“Thank you,” replied Tod, who never forgot to be courteous, as he carefully adjusted the collars of his crutches under his shoulders.

Mr. Hobbs motioned from the window for several of the boys to keep off. With a natural curiosity, they were stealing closer to the building, in the hope of finding out what the rabid dog was doing.

The teacher, seeing his gestures were understood, turned back, when to his surprise, he noticed the top of Tom Clymer’s straw hat, as it slowly rose and sank, moving along the front of the building toward the front door.

Instead of hurrying off, as he should have done, the lad was making his way toward the very spot where the dreadful animal was crouching.

“Why, Tod, what are you doing?” called Mr. Hobbs through the open window;

"you will surely be bitten."

Instead of replying or heeding the words, the lad turned his pale face toward his friend and shook his head, as a warning for him to make no noise. Then he resumed his advance to the open outer door, doing so with great care and stealth, as if afraid of being heard by the brute.

The entrance to the old Woodvale school building was reached by two steps, consisting of the same number of broad high stones worn smooth by the feet of the hundreds of children that had trod them times without number. To make his way into the entry where the pupils hung their hats and bonnets on the double rows of pegs, Tod had to move slowly and carefully use his crutches. Being tipped with iron he could not set them down on the smooth stones without causing noise.

But he acted without hesitation. The teacher read his purpose and knew it was useless to try to check him. He leaned his head out of the window and held his breath, while he watched him.

Tod never faltered, though none could have understood the danger he ran better than he. He had a brother and sister among the children that had scattered in such haste before the snapping cur, and who were gathering again around the building despite the warning gesture of the teacher.

He could not know whether they had all escaped or not, but he was sure that if the dog came forth again, more than one of them must suffer, and in those days there was no Pasteur with his wonderful cure to whom the afflicted ones could be taken.

Tod did not tremble, though it seemed to him the brute must hear the tumultuous throbbing of his heart and rush forth. Puny as was his strength, he meant that, if he did so, he would steady himself on his one support, and grasping the other with both hands, strike the dog with might and main. It is doubtful whether the blow would have stunned the dog, for the little fellow's confidence in himself was greater than his bodily powers warranted.

At the moment he rested the end of the crutch on the smooth surface of the second stone, it slipped, and only by a strong wrench did he save himself from falling. The noise was heard by the animal, who was not six feet distant, and he emitted another moan, which can never be forgotten by those that have heard it.

Certain that the cur was about to rush forth, Tod steadied himself on the single crutch, and, reversing the other, held it firmly in his weak hands. He knew the shuffling sound was caused by the animal moving: uneasily about the entry, and it was strange he did not burst through the open door. But he did not do so, and, like a flash, the cripple shifted his weapon in place under his shoulder. Then, with the same coolness he had shown from the first, he reached his hand forward and grasped the latch.

The smart pull he gave, however, did not stir it. It resisted the effort, as though it was fastened in position. If such were the fact, his scheme was futile.

Setting down both crutches, Tod now leaned against the jamb to prevent himself from falling, seized the handle with both hands, and drew back suddenly and with all his might. This time the door yielded and was closed.

As it did so, the rabid animal flung himself against it with a violence that threatened to carry it off its hinges, but it remained firm and he was a prisoner.

“You are a hero!” called the teacher in a voice tremulous with suppressed emotion.

“I guess we’ve got him fast, but look out, Mr. Hobbs, that he doesn’t reach you.”

“I think there is little danger of that,” said the other, looking anxiously at the inner door, “but we must get help to dispose of him before he can do further injury.”

By this time, so many of the children had come back to the playgrounds that several of those living near were sent home for assistance. It quickly arrived; for Reuben Johnson and his uncle lost no time in spreading the news, and three young men, each with a loaded gun, appeared on the scene, eager to dispose of the dangerous animal. The latter was at such disadvantage that this was done without trouble or risk.

Providentially none of the children had been bitten, though more than one underwent a narrow escape. Such animals as had felt the fangs of the rabid cur were slain, and thus no harm resulted from the brief run of the brute.

OVERREACHED.

Bushrod, or “Bush” Wyckoff was only twelve years old when he went to work for Zeph Ashton, who was not only a crusty farmer, but one of the meanest men in the country, and his wife was well fitted to be the life partner of such a parsimonious person.

They had no children of their own, and had felt the need for years of a willing, nimble-footed youngster to do the odd chores about the house, such as milking cows, cutting and bringing in wood, running of errands, and the scores of odd little jobs which are easy enough for boys, but sorely try the stiff and rheumatic limbs of a man in the decline of life.

Bush was a healthy little fellow—not very strong for his years, but quick of movement, bright-witted, willing, and naturally a general favorite. The misfortunes which suddenly overtook his home roused the keenest sympathy of his neighbors. His father was a merchant in New York, who went to and from the metropolis each week day morning and evening, to his pleasant little home in New Jersey. One day his lifeless body was brought thither, and woe and desolation came to the happy home. He was killed in a railway accident.

The blow was a terrible one, and for weeks it seemed as if his stricken widow would follow him across the dark river; but her Christian fortitude and her great love for their only child sustained her in her awful grief, and she was even able to thank her Heavenly Father that her dear boy was spared to her.

But how true it is that misfortunes rarely come singly. Her husband had amassed a competency sufficient to provide comfortably for those left behind; but his confidence in his fellow-men was wofully betrayed. He was one of the bondsmen of a public official who made a hasty departure to Canada, one evening, leaving his business in such a shape that his securities were compelled to pay fifty thousand dollars. Two others were associated with Mr. Wyckoff, and with the aid of their tricky lawyers they managed matters so that four-fifths of the loss fell upon the estate of the deceased merchant.

The result swept it away as utterly as were the dwellings in the Johnstown Valley by the great flood. The widow and her boy left their home and moved into a little cottage, with barely enough left to keep the wolf of starvation from the door.

It was then that Bush showed the stuff of which he was made. He returned one afternoon and told his mother, in his off-hand way, that he had engaged to work through the summer months for Mr. Ashton, who not only agreed to pay him six dollars a month, but would allow him to remain at home over night, provided, of course, that he was there early each morning and stayed late enough each day to attend to all the chores.

The tears filled the eyes of the mother as she pressed her little boy to her heart, and comprehended his self-sacrificing nature.

“You are too young, my dear child, to do this; we have enough left to keep us awhile, and I would prefer that you wait until you are older and stronger.”

“Why, mother, I am old enough and strong enough now to do all that Mr. Ashton wants me to do. He explained everything to me, and it won’t be work at all, but just fun.”

“Well, I hope you will find it so, but if he does not treat you kindly, you must not stay one day.”

Bush never complained to his mother, but he did find precious little fun and plenty of the hardest kind of work. The miserly farmer bore down heavily on his young shoulders. He and his wife seemed to be continually finding extra labor for the lad. The little fellow was on hand each morning, in stormy as well as in clear weather, at daybreak, ready and willing to perform to the best of his ability whatever he was directed to do. Several times he became so weak and faint from the severe labor, that the frugal breakfast he had eaten at home proved insufficient, and he was compelled to ask for a few mouthfuls of food before the regular dinner hour arrived. Although he always remained late, he was never invited to stay to supper, Mr. Ashton’s understanding being that the mid-day meal was the only one to which the lad was entitled.

But for his love for his mother, Bush would have given up more than once. His tasks were so severe and continuous that many a time he was hardly able to drag himself homeward. Every bone in his body seemed to ache, and neither his employer nor his wife ever uttered a pleasant or encouraging word.

But no word of murmuring fell from his lips. He resolutely held back all complaints, and crept away early to his couch under the plea that it was necessary in order to be up betimes. The mother’s heart was distressed beyond expression, but she comforted herself with the fact that his term of service was drawing to a close, and he would soon have all the rest and play he wanted.

Bush allowed his wages to stand until the first of September, when his three months expired. He had counted on the pride and happiness that would be his when he walked into the house and tossed the whole eighteen dollars in his mother’s lap. How her eyes would sparkle, and how proud he would be!

“Lemme see,” said the skinflint, when settling day arrived; “I was to give you four dollars a month, warn’t I?”

“It was six,” replied Bush, respectfully.

“That warn’t my understanding, but we’ll let it go at that; I’ve allers been too gin’rous, and my heart’s too big for my pocket. Lemme see.”

He uttered the last words thoughtfully, as he took his small account-book from his pocket, and began figuring with the stub of a pencil. “Three months at six dollars will be eighteen dollars.”

“Yes, sir; that’s right.”

“Don’t interrupt me, young man,” sternly remarked the farmer, frowning at him over his spectacles. “The full amount is eighteen dollars—Kerrect—L—em—m—e see; you have et seven breakfasts here; at fifty cents apiece that is three dollars and a half. Then, l—em—m—e see; you was late eleven times, and I’ve docked you twenty-five cents for each time; that makes two dollars and seventy-five cents.”

Inasmuch as Bush’s wages amounted hardly to twenty-five cents a day, it must be admitted that this was drawing it rather strong.

“L—em—m—e see,” continued Mr. Ashton, wetting the pencil stub between his lips, and resuming his figuring; “your board amounts to three dollars and a half; your loss of time to two seventy-five; that makes six and a quarter, which bein’ took from eighteen dollars, leaves ’leven seventy-five. There you are!”

As he spoke, he extended his hand, picked up a small canvas bag from the top of his old-fashioned writing-desk, and tossed it to the dumfounded boy. The latter heard the coins inside jingle, as it fell in his lap, and, as soon as he could command his voice, he swallowed the lump in his throat, and faintly asked:

“Is that—is that right, Mr. Ashton?”

“Count it and see for yourself,” was the curt response.

This was not exactly what Bush meant, but he mechanically unfastened the cord around the throat of the little bag, tumbled the coins out in his hat and slowly counted them. They footed up exactly eleven dollars and seventy-five cents, proving that Mr. Ashton’s figuring was altogether unnecessary, and that he had arranged the business beforehand.

While Bush was examining the coins, his heart gave a sudden quick throb. He repressed all signs of the excitement he felt, however.

“How do you find it?” asked the man, who had never removed his eyes from him, “Them coins have been in the house more’n fifty year—that is, some of ’em have, but they’re as good as if they’s just from the mint, and bein’ all coin, you can never lose anything by the bank bustin’.”

“It is correct,” said Bush.

“Ar’ you satisfied?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Then sign this receipt, and we’re square.”

The lad sat down at the desk and attached his name in a neat round hand to the declaration that he had received payment in full for his services from Mr. Zephaniah Ashton, up to the first of September of the current year.

“This is all mine, Mr. Ashton?”

“Of course—what do you mean by axin’ that?”

“Nothing; good-day.”

“Good-day,” grunted the miser, turning his back, as a hint for him to leave—a hint which Bush did not need, for he was in a tumult of excitement.

“That is the queerest thing that ever happened,” he said to himself when he reached the public highway, and began hurrying along the road in the direction of Newark. “If he had paid me my full wages I would have told him, but all these are mine, and I shall sell them; won’t Professor Hartranft be delighted, but not half as much as mother and I will be.”

* * *

That evening Mr. Ashton and his wife had just finished their supper when Professor Hartranft, a pleasant, refined-looking gentleman, knocked at their door.

“I wish to inquire,” said he, after courteously saluting the couple, “whether you have any old coins in the house.”

“No,” was the surly response of the farmer, “we don’t keep ’em.”

“But you *had* quite a collection.”

“I had ’leven dollars and seventy-five cents’ worth, but I paid ’em out this mornin’.”

“To a boy named Bushrod Wyckoff?”

“Yas.”

“They were given to him unreservedly?—that is, you renounce all claim upon them?”

“What the blazes ar’ you drivin’ at?” demanded the angry farmer. “I owed him ’leven dollars and seventy-five cents for wages, and I paid him purcisely that amount, and have his receipt in full. I’d like to know what business it is of yours anyway.”

Now came the professor’s triumph.

“Young Wyckoff called at my office this afternoon, and I bought a number of the coins from him.”

“What!” exclaimed the amazed farmer, “you didn’t pay him nothin’ extra for that rusty old money, did you? You must be crazy.”

“I did, and shall make a handsome thing of it. For instance, among the coins which you gave him was a copper penny, with a liberty cap, of 1793; I paid Bush three dollars for that; I gave him twenty-five dollars for a half dime coined in 1802; twenty dollars for a quarter dollar of 1827; the same sum for a half dollar, fillet head, of 1796; and, what caps all, five hundred dollars for a silver dollar of 1804. There are only five or six of the latter in existence, and I shall sell this specimen for at least eight hundred dollars. Mr. Ashton, sometimes a mean man overreaches himself, and it looks as though you had made a mistake. I bid you good-day, sir.”

The numismatist spoke the truth; and when the miserly old farmer realized how completely he had turned the tables on himself, it is enough to say that his feelings may be “better imagined than described.”

A BATTLE IN THE AIR.

One of the most interesting towns I ever visited is New Braunfels, Texas. It was founded by a colony of Germans, and experienced the most distressing trials during its early days; but it is now a picture of thrift and industry. The cowboy who attempts to ride through New Braunfels, with his revolvers displayed, is promptly pulled off his mustang and compelled to pay a round fine for violating a city ordinance. If he undertakes to “kick,” it won’t help him a bit, and probably will increase the penalty imposed. Our German cousins propose to run that town to suit themselves, and they succeed quite well.

The rivers of Texas are subjected to violent rises, often as great as twenty feet in an hour or less. Such sudden floods play havoc with the bridges along the bank, but I noticed in riding into New Braunfels an ingenious arrangement of the wooden structure by which, no matter how high the stream may rise, the bridge accommodates itself, and floats on the surface, while securely held from being carried away by the current.

But I set out to tell you a true incident of what happened a few years since, to a bright, lively youngster, sixteen years old, who lives in New Braunfels, and is brimful of pluck. His name is Lee Hemingway; he is an orphan, and if his life is spared, he is certain to be heard from when he reaches man’s estate.

Prof. McInery, the well-known naturalist, spent several weeks last spring in the neighborhood of New Braunfels, hunting ornithological specimens for his collection, and he offered fifty dollars to any one who would bring him an eagle’s nest, with living eaglets or with eggs in it.

When Lee Hemingway learned of the offer, he determined to earn it. It was rather early in the season for our emblematical birds to hatch their young, but, by carefully watching a pair, he succeeded in finding where their nest was made. It was on the summit of an almost insurmountable bowlder, rising nearly a hundred and twenty-five feet in the valley of the Guadaloupe.

The bravest man might well shrink from attempting to scale the perpendicular sides of this mass of rock, but as young Hemingway gazed longingly up the side to the nest, he noticed that the stone had become coated, in the course of time, with earth, which was covered with tangled vines and stunted vegetation.

“I believe I can climb that,” thought the sturdy lad, after scrutinizing the herculean task, and watching one of the eagles soaring far above the summit. “I think there is enough foothold, and I can use the vines to help pull me up; but, if the eagles should catch me at it, they would make music.”

It was the birds that caused him more dread than the forty odd yards of rock. We knew their fierce nature, and, if they discovered his designs against their home, as they were almost certain to do, they would assail him with a fury that must be resistless in his cramped position.

The professor advised him not to make the attempt, but the daring youth had to earn his own living, and the prize of fifty dollars was too tempting to be resisted.

“*I’ll do it*!” he exclaimed, after considering the question, “if you will keep watch with your gun for the eagles.”

“Of course I’ll do *that*,” replied the professor, delighted with the prospect of securing that which he had sought so long in vain.

The preparations for the work were simple. With a basket, furnished with a lid, slung to his back, in which to secure the eggs or eaglets, young Hemingway began his laborious and dangerous ascent, while the professor, gun in hand, watched him from the ground below.

The boy quickly proved the possession of unusual skill as a climber. With the help of the vines he went steadily upward, hunting secure places for his feet and testing every support before trusting his weight to it. Once or twice, the professor thought the lad had made a mistake and was on the point of paying the penalty, but he never faltered nor slipped. Higher and higher he ascended until at last the feat was accomplished, and the very summit reached.

His heart throbbed with pleasure when he discovered two young eagles in the nest. They were no more than a couple of days old, and he had no trouble in placing them and a portion of the nest in the basket, which was again strapped to his back, and, after a brief rest, he started to descend.

Nothing was seen of the parent eagles, and he was congratulating himself on his good fortune, when bang went the professor’s gun. At the same moment a shadow flitted over his head, and looking up he saw that instead of one, both of the eagles had arrived.

The lad had not descended half-way and the professor’s shot did not harm either of them. They landed on the summit of the rocks, and, if a bird can feel astonishment, they must have felt it when they looked around and discovered nothing of their home.

But the great American bird is not the one to submit tamely to such an outrage. They began an immediate investigation, and, when they caught sight of a boy scrambling down the side of the rocks with a basket strapped to his back, from which came a number of familiar squeak-like chirpings, they had no trouble in understanding matters.

The style in which they went for that same boy was a sight to behold. There was no hesitation or maneuvering; but, with outstretched wings and hoarse screeches, they dashed toward him like a couple of cyclones. The youth saw that he was caught in a desperate fix, for he had no weapons, and had to cling to the vines with one hand to save himself from being dashed to the ground below.

He ducked his head to ward off their beaks and talons from his eyes, and tried hard to beat them back with his free hand.

This was impossible. Their beaks struck him repeatedly in the head, bringing blood, which flowed over his face and almost blinded him, while they savagely buffeted him with their great wings, until he was in danger of being knocked from his position.

Meanwhile, the alarmed professor could do nothing for his young friend. The eagles kept so close to him, that, if he tried, he was as likely to hit one as the other. He walked back and forth, on the alert for such a chance, and fortunately had not long to wait. One of the furious birds, circled off a few feet, as if to gather impetus for a decisive charge, when, taking a quick aim, the gentleman fired.

The shot was unerring and killed the female. She fluttered into a large sapling that sprouted from a large crevice in the rocks, about eight feet above the boy's head, and lay motionless. Although nearly blinded by blood, young Hemingway now attempted a feat which he was convinced offered the only means of saving his life.

He drew himself up to the foot of the tree, and once there, braced himself firmly with his feet, and tied his handkerchief around his forehead, to keep the blood out of his eyes. Seizing the dead bird by the feet, he swung it around with might and main and struck the male, which had continued beating him incessantly.

It was a strange weapon—a dead eagle against a live one, and the boy's constrained position prevented his using it with much effect. So lacking, indeed, were the blows in force, that the male flew directly at his face. The sorely beset lad dropped the dead bird and fastened both hands around the throat of his assailant. The latter fought desperately, but the young hero never released his grip, until it ceased its struggles. Then he flung it from him, and it tumbled downward to the professor's feet.

This gentleman had done his best to help his young friend, but was unable to do so. The lad, after resting awhile, picked his way down to the ground, where his feet had hardly touched when he fainted in the professor's arms. He soon rallied, however, though his wounds were so severe that he was obliged to keep his bed for several weeks.

The two eaglets were found uninjured, and were safely carried to the professor's home, as were the bodies of the dead birds. They were mounted by Professor McInery, who, in consideration of the danger undergone by the boy, and the two extra birds, presented Lee with $100, and no one will deny that the money was well earned.

WHO SHALL EXPLAIN IT?

Let me begin by saying that I was never a believer in signs, omens, or the general superstitions which, it must be admitted, influence most people to a greater or less degree. I have been the thirteenth guest at more than one table, without my appetite being affected; I have tipped over my salt-cellar without a twinge of fear; I have never turned aside to avoid passing under a leaning ladder, and I do not care a jot whether the first glimpse of the new moon is over my right or left shoulder.

I had a little boy Bob, who was fourteen years old on the last anniversary of American independence. Being our only son, his mother and myself held him close to our hearts. In fact, I am sure no little fellow was ever regarded with more affectionate love than our Bob. The painful story which, with much hesitation, I have set out to tell is one, therefore, that no member of our little family can ever forget.

We always tried to act the part of sensible parents toward our little boy. He never stepped inside of a school-house until he was seven years old, and, when he did so, it was to stay only a brief while. It was six months before he became acquainted with every letter of the alphabet, and no youngster of his years ever ruined more clothing than he. The destruction of shoes, hats, and trousers was enough to bankrupt many a father, and it often provoked a protest from his mother. I have seen him, within a half hour after having his face scrubbed until it shone like an apple, present himself in such ragged attire and with so soiled a countenance, that it took a second glance to identify him.

And yet, as I sit here writing by the evening lamp, I am glad to recall that I never scolded Bob. I would have been sadly neglectful of my duty had I failed to reprove and advise him, and I am sure he honestly strove to obey my wishes; but the sum and substance of it all was, he couldn’t do it. He was a vigorous little fellow, overrunning with animal spirits, high health, and mischief; and it was a pleasure to me to see him laying the firm foundation of a lusty constitution, which, in later years, could laugh at disease.

And then when he did take a start in his studies, he advanced with a speed that astonished his teacher. At the age of twelve there was not a girl or boy in school (and some of them were several years older than he) who could hold his own with him. I took some credit to myself for all this, for I believed it was largely due to the common-sense I used in his early youth. The foundation was strong and secure, and the building erected upon it was upon solid rock.

During the last two or three years I suffered from a great fear. Between the school-house and our home was a mill-pond, which in many places was fully a dozen feet deep. I knew what a temptation this was to the boys during the long, sultry summer weather, and there was not a day when a dozen youngsters, more or less, were not frolicking and splashing in it.

One afternoon, when I sauntered thither, I found fully a score of them in the height of enjoyment, and the wildest and most reckless fellow was my Bob. When he observed me standing on the shore he was so anxious to astonish me that he ventured into the water up to his chin, I shouted to him to come to shore, for he was in fearful peril, and it needed only a few inches further advance for him to drown before help could reach him.

“Bob,” said I, in a voice and manner that could not be mistaken, “if you ever do that again I’ll whip you within an inch of your life.”

“I won’t, pop,” he replied, in such meek tones that, parent-like, my heart reproached me at once.

“Now,” I added more gently, “every boy ought to learn to swim, and until he is able to do so, he should keep out of deep water. If you will promise me that you will never venture into a depth above your waist until a good swimmer, you may bathe here; otherwise you shall never come near it.”

He gave me his promise, and, telling him that he had been in the water long enough for that afternoon, I asked him to dress himself and come home with me.

I felt that I had been weak. I ought to have forbidden him ever to enter the mill-pond unless in my company, and thus that which followed never could have occurred. I did not tell his mother what had taken place, for I knew she would insist on a strict prohibition of his aimless swimming efforts.

To tell the truth, there were two reasons why I did not forbid Bob to enter the mill-pond. I knew it would be the most cruel kind of punishment, and, I may as well confess it, I didn’t believe the boy would obey me if he gave the pledge. The temptation was too strong to be resisted. Alas! how often our affection closes our eyes to the plainest duty!

And now I have reached a point which prompts me to ask the question at the head of this sketch, “Who Shall Explain It?” I have my own theory, which I shall submit, with no little diffidence, later on.

It was on Saturday afternoon, the ninth of last August, that I became a victim to a greater depression of spirits than I had known for years. I felt nothing of it during the forenoon, but it began shortly after the midday meal and became more oppressive with each passing minute. I sat down at my desk and wrote for a short time. I continually sighed and drew deep inspirations, which gave me no relief. It was as if a great and increasing weight were resting on my chest. Had I been superstitious, I would have declared that I was on the eve of some dreadful calamity.

Writing became so difficult and distasteful that I threw down my pen, sprang from my chair, and began rapidly pacing up and down the room. My wife had gone to the city that morning to visit her relatives, and was not to return until the following day; so I was alone, with only two servants in the house.

I couldn't keep the thoughts of Bob out of my mind. Saturday being a holiday, I had allowed him to go off to spend the afternoon as he chose; and, as it was unusually warm, there was little doubt where and how he was spending it. He would strike a bee-line for that shady mill-pond, and they would spend hours plashing in its cool and delicious depths.

I looked at the clock; it was a few minutes past five, and Bob ought to have been home long ago. What made him so late?

My fear was growing more intense every minute. The boy was in my mind continually to the exclusion of everything else. Despite all my philosophy and rigid common-sense, the conviction was fastening on me that something dreadful had befallen him.

And what was that something? He had been drowned in the mill-pond. I glanced out of the window, half expecting to see a party bearing the lifeless body homeward. Thank Heaven, I was spared that woful sight, but I discerned something else that sent a misgiving pang through me.

It was Mrs. Clarkson, our nearest neighbor, rapidly approaching, as if the bearer of momentous tidings.

"She has come to tell me that Bob is drowned," I gasped, as my heart almost ceased its beating.

I met her on the threshold, with a calmness of manner which belied the tumult within. Greeting her courteously, I invited her inside, stating that my wife was absent.

"I thank you," she said, "but it is not worth while. I thought I ought to come over and tell you."

"Tell me what?" I inquired, swallowing the lump in my throat.

"Why, about the awful dream I had last night."

I was able to smile faintly, and was partly prepared for what was coming.

"I am ready to hear it, Mrs. Clarkson."

"Why, you know it was Friday night, and I never had a dream on a Friday night that didn't come true—never! Where's Bob?" she abruptly asked, peering around me, as if to learn whether he was in the hall.

"He's off somewhere at play."

"Oh, Mr. Havens, you'll never see him alive again!"

Although startled in spite of myself, I was indignant.

"Have you any positive knowledge, Mrs. Clarkson, on the matter?"

"Certainly I have; didn't I just tell you about my dream?"

"A fudge for your dream!" I exclaimed, impatiently; "I don't believe in any such nonsense."

"I pity you," she said, though why I should be pitied on that account is hard to understand.

“But what was your dream?”

“I saw your Bob brought home drowned. Oh, I can see him now,” she added, speaking rapidly, and making a movement as if to wring her hands; “his white face—his dripping hair and clothes—his half-closed eyes—it was dreadful; it will break his mother’s heart—”

“Mrs. Clarkson, did you come here to tell me *that*?”

“Why, of course I did; I felt it was my duty to prepare you—”

“Good day,” I answered, sharply, closing the door and hastily entering my study.

She had given me a terrible shock. My feelings were in a tumult difficult to describe. My philosophy, my self-command, my hard sense and scepticism were scattered to the winds, I had fought against the awful fear, and was still fighting when my neighbor called; but her visit had knocked every prop from beneath me.

She had hardly disappeared when I was hurrying through the woods by the shortest route to the mill-pond. I knew Bob had been there, and all that I expected to find was his white, ghastly body in the cold, cruel depths.

“Oh, my boy!” I wailed, “I am to blame for your death! I never should have permitted you to run into such danger. I should have gone with you and taught you to swim—I can never forgive myself for this—never, never, never. It will break your mother’s heart—mine is already broken—”

“*Pop, just watch me*!”

Surely that was the voice of my boy! I turned my head like a flash, and there he was, with his hands together over his head, and in the act of diving into the mill-pond. Down he went with a splash, his head quickly reappearing, as he flirted the hair and water out of his eyes, and struck out for the middle of the pond.

“What are you doing, Bob?”

“You just wait and see, pop.”

And what did that young rascal do but swim straight across that pond and then turn about and swim back again, without pausing for breath? Not only that, but, when in the very deepest portion, he dove, floated on his back, trod water, and kicked up his heels like a frisky colt.

“How’s that, pop? You didn’t know I could swim, did you?” he asked, as he came smilingly up the bank.

“I had no idea of such a thing,” I replied, my whole being fluttering with gratitude and delight; “I think I’ll have to reward you for that.”

And when he had donned his clothes, and we started homeward, I slipped a twisted bank-bill into his hands. I am really ashamed to tell its denomination, and Bob and I never hinted anything about it to his mother.

And now as to the question, Who shall explain it? I think I can. I have a weakness for boiled beef and cabbage. The meat is healthful enough, but, as every one knows, or ought to know, cabbage, although one of the most digestible kinds of food when raw, is just the opposite in a boiled state. I knew the consequences of eating it, but in the absence of my good wife that day I disposed of so much that I deserved the oppressive indigestion that followed.

That fact, I am convinced, fully explains the dreadful “presentiment” which made me so miserable all the afternoon.

On our way home we passed the house of Mrs. Clarkson. I could not forbear stopping and ringing her bell. She answered it in person.

“Mrs. Clarkson, Bob is on his way home from swimming, and I thought I would let him hear about that wonderful dream—”

But the door was slammed in my face.

I said at the opening of this sketch that I “had” a boy named Bob. God be thanked, I have him yet, and no lustier, brighter, or more manly youth ever lived, and my prayer is that he may be spared to soothe the declining years of his father and mother, whose love for him is beyond the power of words to tell.

A FOOL OR A GENIUS.

CHAPTER I.

Josiah Hunter sat on his porch one summer afternoon, smoking his pipe, feeling dissatisfied, morose and sour on account of his only son Tim, who, he was obliged to confess to himself, gave every indication of proving a disappointment to him.

Mr. Hunter was owner of the famous Brereton Quarry & Stone Works, located about a mile above the thriving village of Brereton, on the eastern bank of the Castaran river, and at a somewhat greater distance below the town of Denville. The quarry was a valuable one and the owner was in comfortable circumstances, with the prospect of acquiring considerable more of a fortune out of the yield of excellent building stone. The quarry had been worked for something like ten years, and the discovery that he had such a fine deposit on his small farm was in the minds of his neighbors equivalent to the finding of a gold mine, for as the excavation proceeded, the quality of the material improved and Mr. Hunter refused an offer from a company which, but for the stone, would have been a very liberal price for the whole farm.

Mr. Hunter had been a widower ever since his boy was three years old, and the youth was now fourteen. His sister Maggie was two years his senior, and they were deeply attached to each other. Maggie was a daughter after her father's own heart,—one of those rare, sensible girls who cannot be spoiled by indulgence, who was equally fond of her parent and who stood unflinchingly by her brother in the little differences between father and son, which, sad to say, were becoming more frequent and serious with the passing weeks and months. It is probable that the affection of the parent for the daughter prevented him from ever thinking of marrying again, for she was a model housekeeper, and he could not bear the thought of seeing anyone come into the family and usurp, even in a small degree, her functions and place.

Mr. Hunter was getting on in years, and nothing was more natural than that he should wish and plan that Tim should become his successor in the development of the valuable quarry that was not likely to give out for many a year to come. But the boy showed no liking for the business. He was among the best scholars in the village school, fond of play and so well advanced in his studies that his parent determined to begin his practical business training in earnest. He looked upon a college education as a waste of so many years, taken from the most precious part of a young man's life, and it must be said that Tim himself showed no wish to attend any higher educational institution.

Tim had assisted about the quarry, more or less for several years. Of course he was too young to do much in the way of manual labor, but there were many errands that he ran, beside helping to keep his father’s accounts. He wrote an excellent hand, was quick in figures and had such a command of language that all his parent had to do was to tell him the substance of the letter he wished written, to have the boy put it in courteous but pointed and clear form. The elder had never detected an error in the computations of the younger, who had no trouble at all when the operations included difficult fractions.

All this was good in its way, but it could not be denied that Tim had no liking for the business itself. His father had told him repeatedly that he must prepare himself for the active management of the stone works, and that to do so required something more than quickness in figures and skill in letter writing. But it was in vain. Tim was never at the works unless by direct command of his parent, and seized the first opportunity to get away.

“No person can succeed in a business which he dislikes,” remarked Mr. Hunter to Maggie who on this summer afternoon sat on the front porch, plying her deft needle, while the waning twilight lasted, with Bridget inside preparing the evening meal.

“I think that is true, father,” was her gentle reply.

“And that boy hates the stone business and I can’t understand why he should.”

“Isn’t it also true, father, that one cannot control his likes and dislikes? Tim has told me he can’t bear the thought of spending his life in getting out great blocks of stone and trimming them into shape for building. He said he wished he could feel as you do, but there’s no use of his trying.”

“Fudge!” was the impatient exclamation; “what business has a boy of his years to talk or think about what sort of business he prefers? It is my place to select his future avocation and his to accept it without a growl.”

“He will do that, father.”

“Of course he will,” replied the parent with a compression of his thin lips and a flash of his eyes; “when I yield to a boy fourteen years old, it will be time to shift me off to the lunatic asylum.”

“Why, then, are you displeased, since he will do what you wish and do it without complaint?

“I am displeased because he is dissatisfied and has no heart in his work. He shows no interest in anything relating to the quarries and it is becoming worse every day with him.”

“Didn’t he help this forenoon?”

“Yes, because I told him he must be on hand as soon as he was through breakfast and not leave until he went to dinner.”

“Did you say nothing about his working this afternoon?”

“No; I left that out on purpose to test him.”

“What was the result?”

“I haven’t seen hide or hair of him since; I suppose he is off in the woods or up in his room, reading or figuring on some invention. Do you know where he is?”

“He has been in his room almost all the afternoon and is there now.”

“Doing what?”

“I guess you have answered that question,” replied Maggie laying aside her sewing because of the increasing shadows, and looking across at her father with a smile.

“That’s what makes me lose all patience. What earthly good is it for him to sit in his room drawing figures of machines he dreams of making, or scribbling over sheets of paper? If this keeps up much longer, he will take to writing poetry, and the next thing will be smoking cigarettes and then his ruin will be complete.”

Maggie’s clear laughter rang out on the summer air. She was always overflowing with spirits and the picture drawn by her parent and the look of profound disgust on his face as he uttered his scornful words stirred her mirth beyond repression.

“What are you laughing at?” he demanded, turning toward her, though without any anger in his tones, for he could never feel any emotion of that nature toward such a daughter.

“It was the idea of Tim writing poetry or rhyme and smoking cigarettes. I’ll guarantee that he will never do either.”

“Nor anything else, you may as well add.”

“I’ll guarantee that if he lives he will do a good many things that will be better than getting out and trimming stone.”

This was not the first time that Maggie had intimated the same faith, without going into particulars or giving any idea upon what she based that faith. The parent looked sharply at her and asked:

“What do you mean? Explain yourself.”

But the daughter was not yet ready to do so. She had her thoughts or dreams or whatever they might be, but was not prepared as yet to share them with her parent. He was not in the mood, and for her to tell all that was in her mind would be to provoke an outburst that would be painful to the last degree. She chose for the present to parry.

“How can I know, father, what ambition Tim has? He is still young enough to change that ambition, whatever it may be.”

“And he’s *got* to change it, as sure as he lives! I am tired of his fooling; he is fourteen years old, big, strong, and healthy; if he would take hold of the work and show some interest in it, he would be able in a couple of years to take charge of the whole business and give me a rest, but he is frittering away valuable time until I’ve made up my mind to permit it no longer.”

The parent knocked the bowl of his pipe against the column of the porch and shook his head in a way that showed he meant every word he said. Maggie was troubled, for she had feared an outbreak between him and Tim, and it seemed to be impending. She dreaded it more than death, for any violence by her beloved parent toward her equally beloved brother would break her heart. That parent, naturally placid and good-natured, had a frightful temper when it was aroused. She could never forget that day when in a quarrel with one of his employes, he came within a hair of killing the man and for the time was a raging tiger.

There was one appeal that Maggie knew had never failed her, though she feared the day would come when even that would lose its power. She reserved it as the last recourse. When she saw her father rise to his feet, and in the gathering gloom noted the grim resolute expression on his face, she knew the crisis had come.

“Tell him to come down-stairs; we may as well have this matter settled here and now.”

“Father,” she said in a low voice of the sweetest tenderness, “you will not forget what he did two years ago?”

The parent stood motionless, silent for a minute, and then gently resumed his seat, adding a moment later,

“No; I can never forget that; never mind calling him just now.”

And what it was that Tim Hunter did “two years ago” I must now tell you.

CHAPTER II.

Bear in mind that Tim Hunter was twelve years old at the time, being the junior by two years of his sister Maggie.

On the day which I have in mind, he had spent the forenoon fishing, and brought home a mess of trout for which he had whipped one of the mountain brooks, and which furnished the family with the choicest sort of a meal. The father complimented him on his skill, for that was before the parent’s patience had been so sorely tried by the indifference of the lad toward the vocation to which the elder meant he should devote his life. He left the lad at liberty to spend the rest of the day as he chose, and, early in the afternoon, he proposed to his sister that they should engage in that old game of “jackstones” with which I am sure you are familiar.

Years ago the country lads and lassies generally used little bits of stones, instead of scraggly, jagged pieces of iron, with which they amuse themselves in these days. Tim had seen some of the improved jackstones; and, borrowing one from a playmate, he made a clay mould from it, into which he poured melted lead, repeating the operation until he had five as pretty and symmetrically formed specimens as one could wish. It was with these in his hands, that he led the way to the barn for a game between himself and sister.

The big, spacious structure was a favorite place for spending their leisure hours. The hard, seedy floor, with the arching rafters overhead could not be improved for their purpose. The shingles were so far aloft that the shade within was cool on sultry summer days, and it was the pleasantest kind of music to hear the rain drops patter on the roof and the wind whistle around the eaves and corners. The mow where the hay was stored was to the left, as you entered the door, and under that were the stalls where the horses munched their dinner and looked solemnly through the opening over the mangers at the two children engaged at play. Between where they sat and the rafters, the space was open.

Maggie took her seat in the middle of the floor, and her brother placed himself opposite. Before doing so, he stepped to the nearest stall and picked up a block of wood six inches in diameter and two feet in length. This he laid on the floor and seated himself upon it, tossing the jackstones to his sister to begin the game.

She was his superior, for her pretty taper fingers were more nimble than his sturdy ones, and, unless she handicapped herself by certain conditions, she invariably won in the contest of skill. She tossed them one after the other, then two or three or more at a time, snatching up the others from the floor and going through the varied performance with an easy perfection that was the wonder of Tim. Once or twice, she purposely missed some feat, but the alert lad was sure to detect it, and declared he would not play unless she did her best, and, under his watchful eye, she could not escape doing so. As I have said, the only way to equalize matters was for her to handicap herself, and even then I am compelled to say she was more often winner than loser.

Sitting on the block of wood tipped up on one end, Tim kept his eyes on the bits of metal, popping up in the air and softly dropping into the extended palm, and wondered again why it was so hard for him to do that which was so easy for her. Finally she made a slip, which looked honest, and resigned the stones to him.

Now, you know that in playing this game, you ought to sit on the floor or ground; for if your perch is higher, you are compelled to stoop further to snatch up the pieces and your position is so awkward that it seriously interferes with your success.

The very first scramble Tim made at the stones on the floor was not only a failure, but resulted in a splinter catching under the nail of one of his fingers. Maggie laughed.

“Why do you sit way up there?” she asked; “you can’t do half as well as when you are lower down like me.”

“I guess you’re right,” he replied, as he pushed the block away and imitated her. “I ’spose I’ll catch the splinters just the same.”

“There’s no need of it; you mustn’t claw the stones, but move your hand gently, just as I do. Now, watch me.”

“It’s a pity that no one else in the world is half as smart as you,” replied the brother with fine irony, but without ill nature. “Ah, wasn’t that splendid?”

Which remark was caused by the plainest kind of fluke on the part of Maggie, who in her effort to instruct her brother, forgot one or two nice points, which oversight was fatal.

“Well,” said she, “I didn’t fill my fingers with splinters.”

“Nor with jackstones either; if I can’t do any better than you I’m sure I can’t do any worse.”

“Well, Smarty, what are you waiting for?”

“For you to pay attention.”

“I’m doing that.”

With cool, careful steadiness, Tim set to work, and lo! he finished the game without a break, performing the more difficult exploits with a skill that compelled the admiration of his sister.

“I’m glad to see that you’re not such a big dunce as you look; I’ve been discouraged in trying to teach you, but you seem to be learning at last.”

“Wouldn’t you like me to give you a few lessons?”

“No; for, if you did, I should never win another game,” was the pert reply; “I wonder whether you will ever be able to beat me again.”

“Didn’t you know that I have been fooling with you all the time, just as I fool a trout till I get him to take the hook?”

Maggie stared at him with open mouth for a moment and then asked in an awed whisper:

“No; I didn’t know that: did *you*?”

“Never mind; the best thing you can do is to tend to bus’ness, for I’m not going to show you a bit of mercy.”

During this friendly chaffing, both noticed that the wind was rising. It moaned around the barn, and enough of it entered the window far above their heads for them to feel it fan their cheeks. An eddy even lifted one of the curls from the temple of the girl. This, however, was of no special concern to them, and they continued their playing.

Each went through the next series without a break. Tim was certainly doing himself honor, and his sister was at a loss to understand it. But you know that on some days the player of any game does much better than on others. This was one of Tim’s best days and one of Maggie’s worst, for he again surpassed her, though there could be no doubt that she did her very best, and she could not repress her chagrin. But she was too fond of her bright brother to feel anything in the nature of resentment for his success.

“There’s one thing certain,” she said, shaking her curly head with determination; “you can’t beat me again.”

“I wouldn’t be so rash, sister; remember that I mean bus’ness to-day.”

“Just as if you haven’t always done your best; it’s you that are bragging, not I.”

Tim had taken the stones in his right hand with the purpose of giving them the necessary toss in the air, when a blast of wind struck the barn with a force that made it tremble. They distinctly felt the tremor of the floor beneath them. He paused and looked into the startled face of his sister with the question:

“Hadn’t we better run to the house?”

“No,” she replied, her heart so set on beating him that she felt less fear than she would have felt had it been otherwise; “it’s as safe here as in the house; one is as strong as the other; if you want to get out of finishing the game, why, I’ll let you off.”

“You know it isn’t that, Maggie; but the barn isn’t as strong as the house.”

“It has stood a good many harder blows than this; don’t you see it has stopped? Go on.”

“All right; just as you say,” and up went the pronged pieces and were caught with the same skill as before. Then he essayed a more difficult feat and failed. Maggie clapped her hands with delight, and leaned forward to catch up the bits and try her hand.

At that instant something like a tornado or incipient cyclone struck the barn. They felt the structure swaying, heard the ripping of shingles, and casting his eyes aloft, Tim saw the shingles and framework coming down upon their heads.

It was an appalling moment. If they remained where they were, both would be crushed to death. The door was too far away for both to reach it; though it was barely possible that by a quick leap and dash he might get to the open air in the nick of time, but he would die a hundred times over before abandoning his sister. The open window was too high to be reached from the floor without climbing, and there was no time for that.

The action of a cyclone is always peculiar. Resistless as is its power, it is often confined to a very narrow space. The one to which I am now referring whipped off a corner of the roof, so loosening the supports that the whole mass of shingles and rafters covering the larger portion came down as if flung from the air above, while the remainder of the building was left unharmed, the terrified horses not receiving so much as a scratch.

There was one awful second when brother and sister believed that the next would be their last. Then Tim threw his arm around the neck of Maggie and in a flash drew her forward so that she lay flat on her face and he alongside of her; but the twinkling of an eye before that he had seized the block of wood, rejected some time before as a chair, and stood it on end beside his shoulder, keeping his right arm curved round it so as to hold it upright in position, while the other arm prevented Maggie from rising.

“Don’t move?” he shouted amid the crashing of timbers and the roaring of the gale; “lie still and you won’t be hurt.”

She could not have disobeyed him had she tried, for the words were in his mouth when the fearful mass of timber descended upon them.

CHAPTER III.

Do you understand what Tim Hunter did? Had the mass of timber descending upon him and his sister been unchecked, they would not have lived an instant. Had it been shattered into small fragments by the cyclone, the ingenious precaution which a wonderful presence of mind enabled hint to make, would have been of no avail.

Take a block of seasoned oak, six inches through, and two feet in height, and interpose it squarely against an approaching body and it is almost as powerful in the way of resistance as so much metal. It would take an ironclad to crush it to pulp, by acting longitudinally or along its line of length. This block stood upright, and received a portion of the rafters, covered by the shingles and held them aloft as easily as you can hold your hat with your outstretched arm. From this point of highest support, the debris sloped away until it rested on the floor, but the open space, in which the brother and sister lay, was as safe as was their situation, before the gale loosened the structure.

Tim called to his sister and found that not so much as a hair of her head had been harmed, and it was the same with himself. All was darkness in their confined quarters, but the wrenched framework gave them plenty of air to breathe.

Who can picture the feelings of the father, when he saw the collapse of the roof of the barn and knew that his two children were beneath? He rushed thither like a madman, only to be cheered to the highest thankfulness the next moment at hearing their muffled assurances that both were all right. A brief vigorous application of his axe and the two were helped out into the open air, neither the worse for their dreadful experience.

The parent could hardly believe what had been done by his boy, when Maggie told him, until an examination for himself showed that it was true. He declared that neither he nor anyone would have thought of the means and applied it with such lightning quickness. It certainly was an extraordinary exhibition of presence of mind and deserved all the praise given to it. The Brereton *Intelligencer* devoted half a column to a description of the exploit and prophesied that that “young man” would be heard from again. For weeks and months there was nothing at the disposal of Mr. Hunter which was too good for his boy and it is probable that the indulgence of that period had something to do with making Tim dissatisfied with the prospect of spending all his life as a “hewer of stone.”

Gradually as the effects of the remarkable rescue wore off, the impatience of the parent grew until we have seen him on the point of calling to account the boy who had really been the means of saving two lives, for his own was as much imperilled as the sister’s. Once more she appealed to that last recourse, and once more it did not fail her. When he recalled that dreadful scene, he could not help feeling an admiring gratitude for his boy. Although silent and reserved some time later, when the three gathered round the table for their evening meal, nothing unpleasant was said by the parent, though the sharp-witted Tim felt a strong suspicion of the cause of his father’s reserve.

Later in the evening, the latter sat down by the table in the sitting room and took up his copy of the Brereton *Intelligencer*, which had arrived that afternoon. He always spent his Thursday evenings in this manner, unless something unusual interfered, the local news and selected miscellany affording enough intellectual food to last him until retiring time.

While he was thus occupied, Tim and Maggie played checkers, there being little difference in their respective skill. They were quiet, and when necessary to speak, did so in low tones, so as not to disturb the parent.

An hour had passed, when he suddenly turned, with his spectacles on his nose, and looked at the children. The slight resentment he still felt toward Tim caused him to address himself directly to his sister:

“Maggie, do you know who has been writing these articles in the paper for the last few weeks?”

She held a king suspended as she was on the point of jumping a couple of Tim’s and asked in turn:

“What articles?”

“They are signed ‘Mit’ and each paper for the last two or three months has had one of them.”

“No, sir; I do not know who wrote them.”

“Well, whoever he is he’s a mighty smart fellow.”

“Maybe it’s a ‘she,’ ” suggested Maggie, as she proceeded to sweep off the board the two kings of Tim that had got in the path of her single one.

“Fudge! no woman can write such good sense as that. Besides, some of them have been on the tariff, the duties of voters, the Monroe Doctrine and politics: what does any woman know about such themes as those?”

“Don’t some women write about them?”

“I haven’t denied that, but that doesn’t prove that they know anything of the subjects themselves.”

The miss could make no suitable response to this brilliant remark and did not attempt to do so, while Tim said nothing at all, as if the subject had no attraction to him.

By and by the parent uttered a contemptuous sniff. He was reading “Mit’s” contribution, and for the first time came upon something with which he did not agree.

“He’s ’way off there,” remarked the elder, as if speaking to himself.

“What is it, father?” asked Maggie, ceasing her playing for the moment, for her affection always led her to show an interest in whatever interested him.

“The article is the best I have read until I get toward the end. Listen: ‘No greater mistake can be made than for a parent to force a child into some calling or profession for which he has no liking. The boy will be sure to fail.’ Now, what do you think of *that*?”

“The latter part sounds very much like what you said to me this afternoon.”

“It isn’t that, which is true enough, but the idea that a boy knows better than his father what is the right profession for him to follow. That doctrine is too much like Young America who thinks he knows it all.”

“Read on, father; let me hear the rest.”

The father was silent a minute or two, while he skimmed through the article.

“It isn’t worth reading,” he remarked impatiently, thereby proving that he had been hit by the arguments which he found difficult to refute. Maggie made no comment, but smiled significantly at Tim across the board, as they resumed their game.

In truth, Mr. Hunter had come upon some sentiments that set him to thinking, such, for instance, as these: “It may be said with truth in many cases, that the father is the best judge of what the future of his son should be. In fact no one can question this, but the father does not always use that superior knowledge as he should. Perhaps he has yielded to the dearest wish of the mother that their son should become a minister. The mother’s love does not allow her to see that her boy has no gifts as a speaker and no love for a clergyman’s life. He longs to be a lawyer or doctor. Will any one deny that to drive the young man into the pulpit is the greatest mistake that can be made?

“Sometimes a father, with an only son, perhaps, intends that he shall be trained to follow in his footsteps. The boy has a dislike for that calling or profession,—a dislike that was born with him and which nothing can remove. His taste runs in a wholly different channel; whatever talent he has lies there. While it may be convenient for him to step into his parent’s shoes, yet he should never be forced to do so, but be allowed to select that for which he has an ability and toward which he is drawn. Parents make such sad mistakes as these, and often do not awake to the fact until it is too late to undo the mischief that has been done. Let them give the subject their most thoughtful attention and good is sure to follow.”

It was these words, following on the talk he had had with Maggie a short time before that set Mr. Hunter to thinking more deeply than he had ever done over the problem in which his son was so intimately concerned. After his children had retired and he was left alone, he turned over the paper and read the article again. It stuck to him and he could not drive it away. Laying the journal aside, he lit his pipe and leaned back in his chair.

“It is not pleasant,” he mused, “to give up the idea of Tim becoming my successor, for he is the only one I have ever thought of as such. But there is force in what ‘Mit’ says about driving a boy into a calling or profession that he hates; he will make a failure of it, whereas he might become very successful if left to follow his own preferences. I wonder who ‘Mit’ is; his articles are the best I have ever read in the *Intelligencer*; I must ask the editor, so I can have him out here and talk over this question which is the biggest bother I ever had.”

Before Maggie and Tim separated to go to their rooms, and while at the top of the stairs they whispered together for a few minutes. The parent had got thus far in his musings, when he heard the voice of Maggie calling from above:

“Father, do you think ‘Mit’ is a smart fellow?”

“Of course, even though I may not agree with all his views,” replied the parent, wondering why his child was so interested.

“Would you like to know who he is?”

“Of course, but you told me you didn’t know.”

“I didn’t at that time, but I have learned since. If you will spell the name backwards and put it before your surname, you will have that of the youth who wrote the articles you admire so much.”

The parent did as suggested, and behold! the name thus spelled out was that of his only son, whose writings he had praised before the young man’s face.

CHAPTER IV.

When the chuckling Tim told his sister the secret as he paused to kiss her good-night at the head of the stairs, he did not dream that she would reveal it to their father; but, before he could exact a promise, she emitted the truth, despite his attempts to place his hand over her mouth. Then she darted off, and, humiliated and chagrined, he went to his own room.

But the parent was given more to think about. He was pleasant to both the next morning at breakfast and made no reference to the matter that was in the minds of all. Just as the meal was finished, he remarked:

“Tim, the load of stone is ready and we will take it over to Montvale to-day; wouldn’t you like to go with us?”

“Thank you, father; I shall be glad to go.”

“All right; as soon as you and Maggie are through with your nonsense, come out to the wharf and join us.”

The method of transporting stone from the Brereton quarries to Montvale, on the other side of the river, was simple. The canal ran directly in front of the quarries, and there the boat was loaded with the heavy freight. It was then drawn by horse through the canal Denville, several miles to the north, where the waterway touched the level of the Castaran river. Passing through a lock, the boat was pulled across the stream by means of a rope, and wheel arrangement (a heavy dam furnishing comparatively deep and smooth water), when another lock admitted it to the canal on the opposite side.

The boat, which lay against the bank of the canal near the quarries, was loaded so heavily that it was brought as low in the water as was safe. Then a horse was hitched fast, and with Tim driving, and with Warren and his father and two men on board, the craft began slowly moving against the sluggish current.

The start was made in the morning, and before the forenoon was half gone they were at the lower end of Denville, where preparations were quickly made for crossing the river. The horse was taken on board, the boat securely fastened by a strong rope at the bow and stern, so as to hold her broadside against the current, and then the contrivance began dragging her slowly toward the opposite shore.

During the spring months and the period of high water, a great many rafts of lumber descend the Castaran, though the number is not so great of late years as formerly. They are sold at various points along the river, and occasionally two or three rafts float down stream during the summer months. A long sweeping paddle (sometimes a couple) at either end of the raft enable the men to clear the abutments of the bridges and to shoot the rapids at different points.

The canal boat, with its cargo of stone had no more than fairly left the eastern side, when a large raft was observed emerging from between two abutments of the bridge above. The men at the oars began toiling with them with a view of working the structure toward the rapids, through which the only safe passage can be secured.

Those on the boat having nothing to do had seated themselves here and there, and were watching their surroundings, as they moved at right angles to the current. The raft was heading toward a point just ahead of the boat, and was so near that Tim, who was sitting beside his father on the cabin, started to his feet and said:

“I believe they are going to strike us.”

“Sit down; there is no danger; these people know their business; we shall be well out of their way before they can reach us.”

Nevertheless a collision seemed so imminent a moment later, that Mr. Hunter rose to his feet and motioned to those working the rope to give the boat greater speed. At the same time he shouted to the raftsmen:

“Keep off; don’t you see we are in danger?”

“Get out of the way, then!” was the reply; “we must go through there.”

Such manifestly was their right, and the gentleman again waved his hands to those on both shores. But they saw the danger, and applying all the power at their command, the boat began moving so much faster that Mr. Hunter resumed his seat.

“It’s all right now,” he remarked; “but it looked mighty squally a minute ago.”

The canal boat was now crossing the rapid current, where a passage-way had been left on purpose for rafts. It had not quite reached the middle, toward which the structure was aiming, but its speed was sufficient to take it well out of the way, provided no accident occurred.

And this is just what did occur. The unusual strain on the gearing caused something to give way, and the forward motion of the craft ceased at the very moment it reached the middle of the strong current. Those on the bank who were managing the apparatus saw the trouble at once, and strove desperately to extricate the boat from its perilous situation, but they were powerless.

“For Heaven’s sake, keep off!” shouted Mr. Hunter to the raftsmen; “if you don’t we shall be ruined!”

As he spoke he caught up a long pole, and pressing one end against the bed of the river exerted himself with might and main to impel the boat forward. He called to the two men to do the same, and under their united propulsion the boat advanced, but at a snail’s pace.

The lumbermen, seeing the alarming state of affairs, put forth all their strength to swing the raft over so that it would pass between the boat and the eastern shore. There was scant room for this, but they were hardly less anxious than the imperilled boatmen, to whom the consequences were certain to be more serious than to themselves.

Had the distance been greater they might have succeeded, but under the circumstances it was impossible. Dipping the broad blades of the long oars, balanced at the ends of the raft, the men almost lay on their faces as they held their breath and pushed with every ounce of strength at their command. Then, when they reached the edge of the raft, they bore down so as to lift the blade from the water, ran back to the other side, dipped the oar again and shoved as before.

Meanwhile Mr. Hunter and his assistants were panting and red in the face, as they desperately strove to force the boat from the path of the approaching raft, which came plunging down upon them with increasing speed.

“No use!” he suddenly exclaimed, flinging the wet pole in the center of the boat on top of the stone; “we shall be shivered to atoms! Be ready to jump on the raft as it crushes through us! Leave the horse to take care of himself! Tim, you know how to swim, but jump on the raft with us—Heavens! what have you done, my son?”

A few seconds before the boy had caught up the sharp hatchet lying near the cabin, and intended for use of splitting fuel for the stove. With two quick blows he severed the rope which held the stern. The latter yielded to the strong current dashing against it, and began swinging around, so that it quickly lay parallel with the river, with the bow pointing up stream, and held securely by the rope fastened at that end.

This was no more than fairly done when the enormous raft swept past, so close that the nearest log was heard scraping the entire length of the boat. The impact drove it clear, and before any one beside the boy realized how it was done the entire structure had gone by, no damage was done and all were safe.

“Jim,” said Mr. Hunter, a minute after, when the flurry was over, “what a set of fools we were that we didn’t think of that.”

“I don’t agree with you,” replied the other, “because no one would have thought of it except *that* youngster.”

“Tim,” added the father, placing his hand affectionately on his head, “I am proud of you.”

And the little fellow blushed and replied:

“I’m glad I happened to think of it in time, but it *was* rather close, wasn’t it?”

“It couldn’t have been more so, and but for you boat and cargo would have been a dead loss, and more than likely some of us would have lost our lives.”

That night at the supper table, Mr. Hunter remarked with a meaning smile:

“Maggie, the Hunter family contains a fool and a genius, I’m not the genius and ‘Mit’ isn’t the fool.”

“Father, you are not just to yourself,” the boy hastened to say; “I have done wrong in not appreciating your kindness or indulgence, and I have resolved to do my best to please you. I think I have some talent for composition and invention, but I can use it just as well, without neglecting the quarries and stone works, and if you will permit, I shall give you all the help I can in the business with the hope that some day, which I pray may be far distant, I shall become your successor."

Tears filled the eyes of all, as the parent, rising from his chair, placed his hand on the head of Tim and said, in a tremulous voice:

"God bless you, my son!"

[The end of The Jungle Fugitives: A Tale of Life and Adventure in India Including also Many Stories of American Adventure, Enterprise and Daring by Ellis, Edward S.]