

Jimmy's Big Brother

By BRET HARTE.

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As night crept up from the valley that first quiet afternoon Sawyer's ledge was at first quite blotted out by wind and rain, but presently reappeared in the little nebulous, starlike points along the mountain side as the straggling cabins of the settlement were, one by one, lit up by the miners, returning from their claims. These lights were of varying brilliancy that evening, two notably so; one that eventually resolved itself into a many-candled illumination of a cabin of evident festivity; the other into a glimmering taper in the window of a silent one. They might have represented the extreme mutations of fortune in the settlement that night; the celebration of a strike by Robert Fallon, a lucky miner, and the sickbed of Dick Lasham, an unlucky one.

The latter was, however, not quite alone. He was ministered to by Daddy Folsom, a weak but emotional and aggressively hopeful neighbor, who was sitting beside the wooden bunk where the invalid lay. Yet there was something perfunctory in his attitude; his eyes were continually straying to the window, whence the illuminated Fallon festivities could be seen between the trees, and his ears were more intent on the songs and laughter that came faintly from the distance than on the fevered, pleading and unintelligible moans of the sufferer.

Nevertheless, he looked troubled equally by the condition of his charge and by his own enforced absence from the revels. A more impatient moan from the sick man, however, brought a change to his abstracted face and he turned to him with an exaggerated expression of sympathy.

"In course, Lordy! I know just what those pains are, kinder or ef you was hain't a tooth pulled that had roots branched all over ye! My I've just had 'em so bad I couldn't keep from yellin'! That's hot rheumatics! Yes, sir, I oughter know! And (confidentially) the singular thing about 'em is that they get worst just as they're going off—sorter wringin' yer hand and punchin' ye in the back to say 'Good-by!' There!" he continued, as the man sank exhaustedly back on his ruddy pillow of four sacks. "There, didn't I tell ye? Ye'll be an' right in a minute, an' here I'll be a jay bird in the mornin'. Oh, don't tell me about rheumatics—I've bin that! Only mine was the cold kind—that hangs on longest; yours is the hot, that burns itself up in no time!"

If flushed face and bright eyes of Lasham were not enough to corroborate this symptom of high fever, the quick wandering laugh he gave would have indicated the point of delirium. But the too optimistic Daddy Folsom referred this act to improvement, and went on cheerfully: "Yes, sir, you're better now, an' here I'll be a jay bird in the mornin'. Oh, don't tell me about rheumatics—I've bin that! Only mine was the cold kind—that hangs on longest; yours is the hot, that burns itself up in no time!"

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"The letter," said the sick man, hurriedly, "the letter, the letter." Daddy Lashed suddenly over the bed. It was impossible for even his hopefulness to avoid the fact that Lasham was delirious. It was a strong factor in the case—one that would certainly justify his going over to Fallon's with the news. For the present moment, however, this aberration was to be accepted cheerfully and humored after Daddy's own fashion.

"In course, the letter, the letter," he said, confidentially; "that's what the boys have bin singin' jest now. 'Good-by, Charley, when you are away, Write a letter, I'll send me a letter love.' That's what you heard—and a mighty purty song it is, too, and kinder clings to you. It's wonderful how these things gets in your head!"

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interruption, "he says you're just to keep your eyes skinned lookin' out for him comin' in home any time—day or night. All you've got to do is sit up and wait. He might come and even make you out of your beds. He might come with four horses and a trigger driver, or he might come disguised as an ornary tramp. Only you've got to be keen on watchin'. (Ye see," interrupted Daddy, explanatorily, "that'll jes' keep them kids lively.") He says Clissy's to stop cryin' right off, and if Willie Walker hits yer on the right cheek, you just slug out with yer left fist—cordin' to Scripser."

"Gosh!" ejaculated Daddy, stopping suddenly and gazing anxiously at Houston, "there's that blamed photograph—I clean forgot that!"

"And Dick hasn't got one in the shop, and never had," returned Houston emphatically. "Golly!—that stumps us! Unless," he added, with diabolical thoughtfulness, "we take Bob's. The kids don't remember Dick's face, and Bob's about the same age. And it's a regular star picture—your bet! Bob had it taken in Sacramento—in all his Bob didn't see that it was a photograph aimed against him. He really thought it was a likeness, which did full justice to Bob's long, silken mustache and large brown, determined eyes. "I'll snake it off while they ain't lookin', and you jam it in the letter. Bob won't miss it, and we can fix it up with Dick after he's well, and send another."

Daddy silently grasped the "infant's" hand, who presently secured the photograph without attracting attention from the card-players. It was promptly enclosed in the letter, addressed to Master James Lasham, and literally "gospel truth" every word of your letter—"

"My letter!" interrupted Fallon. "The young girl's scarlet lip curled slightly. "I beg your pardon. I should have said the letter you dictated. Of course it wasn't in your handwriting—you had hurt your hand, you know," she added ironically. "At all events, they believed it—all that you were coming at any moment; they lived in that belief, and the poor things went to the station with your photograph in their hands so that they might be the first to recognize and greet you."

"With my photograph?" interrupted Fallon again. "The young girl's clear eyes darkened ominously. "I reckon," she said, deliberately, as she slowly drew from her pocket the photograph Daddy Folsom had sent, "that that is your photograph. It certainly seems an excellent likeness," she added, regarding him with a slight suggestion of contemptuous triumph.

In an instant the revelation of the whole matter was already looking forgotten. The passage in Houghton's letter about the stolen photograph stood clearly before him; the coincidence of his appearance in Shepherdstown and the natural mistake of the children and their father were made perfectly plain. But with this relief and the certainty that he could confound her with an explanation came a certain mischievous desire to prolong the situation and increase his triumph. She certainly had not shown him any favor.

"Have you got the letter also?" he asked. "She whisked it impatiently from her pocket and handed it to him. As he read Daddy's characteristic extravagance, and recognized the familiar idiosyncrasies of his old companion, he was unable to restrain a smile. He raised his eyes to meet with surprise the fair stranger's level, eyebrow and brightly indignat eyes, in which, however, the rain was fast gathering with the lightning.

"It may be amusing to you, and I reckon likely it was all a Californian joke," she said, with slightly trembling lips. "I don't know no'th'n gentlemen and their ways, an' you seem to have forgotten our ways as you have your kindred. Perhaps all this may not seem so funny to them; it may not seem funny to that boy who is crying his heart out in the hall; it may not be very amusing to that poor Clissy in her sick bed longing to see her brother. It may be so far from amusing to her that I should hesitate to bring you there in her excited condition and subject her to the pain that you have caused him. But I have promised her; she is already expecting you, and the disappointment may be a dangerous one. I can only hope you will be a few moments at the moment to show a little more affection than you feel." As he made an impulsive, deprecating gesture, yet without changing his look of restrained amusement, she stopped him hopefully. "Oh, of course, yes, I know it is years since you have seen them; they have no right to expect more; only, only—feeling as you do," she burst out impulsively, "why, why did you come?"

she knew why." She ceased and walked to the window. Fallon rose. The storm that had swept through the valley was over. The quick determination to resolve upon an infinite patience which had made him what he was were all there, and with it a conscientiousness that his selfish independence had hitherto kept dormant. He accepted the situation, not passively—it was not in his nature—but thrust himself into it with all his energy.

"You were quite right," he said, halting a moment beside her. "I don't blame you, and let me hope that later you may think me less to blame than you do now. Now, what's to be done? Clearly, I've first to make it right with Tommy—I mean Jimmy—and then we must make a straight dash over to the girl. Whooop!" Before she could understand from his face the strange change in his voice, he dashed out of the room. In a moment he reappeared with the girl struggling in his arms. "Think of the little scamp not knowing his own brother!" he laughed, giving the boy a really affectionate, if slightly exaggerated, hug, "and expecting me to open my arms to the first little boy who jumps into them! I've a great mind not to give him the present I fetched all the way from California. Wait a moment!" He dashed into the bedroom, opened his valise—where he providentially remembered he had kept, with a miser's superstition, the first little nugget of gold quartz and gold—dashed the tiny bit of quartz into Jimmy's eager eyes.

If the heartiness, sympathy, and charming kindness of the man's whole manner and face convinced, even while it slightly startled the young girl, it was still more effective with the boy. Children are quick to detect the false ring of affected emotion, and Bob's was so genuine—whatever its cause—that it might be easily passed for a fraternal expression with harder the child trustfully nestled against him, and would have grasped the gold, but the young man whisked it into his pocket. "Not until we've shown it to our little sister—where we're going now! I'm to order a sleigh." He dashed out again to the office, as if he found some relief in action, or as it seemed to Miss Boutelle, to avoid embarrassing conversation. When he came back again he was carrying an immense bearskin taken from his luggage. He cast a critical look at the girl's unseasonable attire.

"I shall wrap you and Jimmy in this—you know it's snowing frightfully." Miss Boutelle flushed a little. "I'm warm enough when walking," she said coldly. Bob glanced at her smart little French shoes and thoughtfully bundled his two guests down stairs and into the street. The whirlwind dance of snow made the sleigh an indistinct bulk in the gathering darkness, and as the young girl for an instant dazedly still, Bob incontinently lifted her from her feet, depositing her in the vehicle, dropped Jimmy in her lap, and wrapped them both tightly in the bearskin. Her weight, which was scarcely more than a child's, struck him in that moment as being tantalizingly incongruous to the martyrdom of her shoes and the reply, "shake the dust of the town off her feet, and she hoped he would. She was a little softened on arriving to find Jimmy in tears. He had lost poor Dick's photograph—Dick had forgotten to give it back at the hotel, for this was all he had in his pocket. And he produced a letter, the missing letter of course, which by some mistake he had handed back instead of the photograph. Miss Boutelle saw the supercription and Californian postmark with a vague curiosity.

"Did you look inside, dear? Perhaps it slipped in." Jimmy had not. Miss Boutelle did, and I grieve to say, ended by reading the whole letter. Bob Fallon had finished packing his things the next morning, and was waiting for Mrs. Ricketts and Jimmy. But when a tap came at the door he opened it to find Miss Boutelle standing there. "I have sent Jimmy in the bedroom," she said, with a faint smile, "to look for the photograph which you gave him in mistake for this. I think for the present he prefers his brother's picture to this letter, which I have not explained to him nor any one." She stopped, and, raising her eyes to his, said gently: "I think it would have only been a part of your goodness to have trusted me, Mr. Fallon."

"Then you will forgive me," he said, eagerly. She looked at him frankly, yet with a faint air of coquetry that the angels might have pardoned. "Do you mean to say to you what Mrs. Ricketts says were the last words of poor Clissy?"

A year later, when the darkness and rain were creeping up Sawyer's ledge, and Houston and Daddy Folsom were sitting before their brushwood fire in the old Lasham cabin, the latter delivered himself of the following: "It's a mighty queer thing, that news about Bob! It's not that he's married, for that might happen to any one, but this year account in the paper of his wedding being attended by his little brother. That gets me! To think all the while he was here he was lettin' on to us that he hadn't kids or kin. Well, sir, that accounts to me for one thing—the singular way he tumbled to that letter of poor Dick Lasham's little brother sent him that first day. Don't you see? It was a feller feeling. Know how it was himself. I reckon ye all thought I was kinder soft reading that letter of Dick Lasham's little brother to him—but ye see what it did."

OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

In the private schools of China a teacher is paid about one-half penny a day for each pupil. The strongest fortress in European Russia is Kronstadt. It is the Russian naval depot of the Baltic sea. In Hungary there are thousands of villages and hundreds of small towns without a doctor within ten miles. The Chinese discovered gunpowder at least 800 years ago, and made stone mortars that threw heavy stone projectiles. The ordinary beer glass is regulated by law in Bavaria, and must hold exactly half a litre, or nearly nine-tenths of a pint. The first Protestant missionary in China was Dr. Robert Morrison, who was sent out by the London Missionary Society in 1807. The longest continuous run on a railway train in Europe is that from Paris to Constantinople, 1,921 miles, in sixty-four and one-quarter hours. In a prairie dry atmosphere animal life can exist at a temperature of 300 degrees Fahrenheit; that is, 88 degrees above the boiling point of water. Moscow has the largest hospital in Europe, with 1,200 beds. There are ninety-three physicians and 960 nurses, and about 15,000 patients are cared for annually. The Chinese are inferior to Europeans in physical strength, but show a marvelous amount of endurance. They will work nineteen hours a day without complaining. London has a larger commerce than any other city in the world. Liverpool comes next and Hamburg probably ranges third, although Antwerp closely approaches her. By a peculiar provision of the Constitution of the United States, the president, elected in 1865, is five years. After next November the term will be four years. The United States is now the many people, the greatest producer of wool in the world. Russia last year produced 3,000,000 tons, or \$56,000 tons more than the United States. The garments of the Oriental women are not subject to change of fashion—the shape

"It's your brother Dick, dearie. Don't you know him?" Then the girl's lips moved faintly. "Dick's dead," she whispered. "She's wandering," said Mrs. Ricketts. "Speak to her." But Bob, with his eyes on Clissy, lifted a protesting hand. The sufferer's lips moved again. "It isn't Dick—it's the angel God sent to tell me."

She spoke no more. And when Miss Boutelle returned with the doctor she was beyond the reach of finite voices. Fallon would have remained all night with them, but he could see that his further presence in the contracted household was not desired. Even his offer to take Jimmy with him to the hotel was declined, and at midnight he returned alone.

What his thoughts were that night may be easily imagined. Clissy's death had removed the only cause he had for concealing his real identity. There was nothing more to prevent his revealing all to Miss Boutelle and to offer to adopt the boy. But he reflected this could not be done until after the funeral, for it was only due to Clissy's memory that he should still keep up the role of Dick Lasham as chief mourner. If it seems strange that Bob did not in this crucial moment take Miss Boutelle into his confidence I fear it was because he dreaded the personal effect of the deed he had practiced upon her more than any ethical consideration; she had softened considerably in her attitude towards him that night; he was human, after all, and while he felt his conduct had been unselfish in the main he dared not confess to himself how much her opinion had influenced him. He resolved that after the funeral he would continue his journey and write to her, en route, a full explanation of his conduct, enclosing Daddy's letter as corroborative evidence. But, on searching his letter case, he found that he had lost even that evidence, and he must trust solely to present to her faith in his improbable story.

It seemed as if his greatest sacrifice was demanded at the funeral, for it could not be disguised that the neighbors were strongly prejudiced against him. Even the preacher improved the occasion to warn the congregation against the dangers of putting off duty until too late. And when Robert Fallon, pale but self-restrained, left the church with Miss Boutelle, equally pale and reserved, on his arm he could with difficulty restrain his fury at the passing of a significant smile across the faces of a few curious bystanders. "It was Amy Boutelle that was the 'penitence' that fetched him, you bet, he overheard a lady conversing with her, and she said, 'And it's a good thing she's made out of it, too, for he's mighty rich.' At the church door he took her cold hand into his. 'I am leaving to-morrow morning with Jimmy,' he said with a white face. 'Good-bye.' 'You are quite right; good-bye,' she replied as briefly, but with the faintest color. He wondered if she had heard it too. Whether she had or not, he never went home with Mrs. Ricketts in some righteous indignation which found after the young lady's habit-free expression. Whatever were Mr. Lasham's faults of omission, it was most unchristian to allude to them there and an insult to poor little dear's memory, who had forgiven them. Where she in his shoes he would shake the dust of the town off her feet, and she hoped he would. She was a little softened on arriving to find Jimmy in tears. He had lost poor Dick's photograph—Dick had forgotten to give it back at the hotel, for this was all he had in his pocket. And he produced a letter, the missing letter of course, which by some mistake he had handed back instead of the photograph. Miss Boutelle saw the supercription and Californian postmark with a vague curiosity.

HUMOR OF THE DAY.

So Near and Yet So Far.
Detroit Journal.
The Peacemaker—Your husband complains that you are distant.
The Wife—He is so dreadfully close!

Proof.
Chicago Times-Herald.
"Is she very stylish?"
"I should think she was. Her baby is a year and a half old now and regards her as an utter stranger."

Bound to Take Him.
New York Sun.
"Why, ask the girl of a newly engaged couple, 'Will you like the American troops at Nagasaki?'"
"Give it up," he replied.
"Because I'm going to Taku."

The Reason.
Puck.
"Askin'—Why don't you get married old fellow? It is because you cannot afford it."
"Borrowin' (frankly)—No; it is because the girl's father can't afford it."

Fully Prepared.
Answers.
"Don't you dare kiss me!" she cried warningly.
"Why, I wasn't thinking of such a thing," he said.
"Well, was," she replied firmly.

Vocal Possibilities.
Answers.
"Do you think, professor, said a musically ambitious young man, that I can ever do anything with my voice?"
"Well," was the cautious reply, "it may come in handy to holler with in case of fire."

After the Collision.
Life.
Conductor—Why didn't you wave that red flag instead of the green when I sent you down the track? You could have saved this train.
Pat—For no man will I wave a red flag when I have a granite wain.

Bad Taste.
Chicago Times-Herald.
"Some people don't seem to have any idea of the fitness of things at all."
"At our Sunday-school picnic, the other day, Mrs. Goodwillie didn't furnish a thing but deviled ham sandwiches."

His Blunder.
Chicago Tribune.
"Your wife seems to have taken a violent dislike to Meecum."
"Yes. When he was at the house the other day he leaned his head back against one of the ornamented tiles she keeps on the rocking chairs for that purpose."

The Best Way.
Puck.
Castleton—What do you think! Here's a fellow who writes and says I borrowed 10 of him eight years ago and he wants the money.
Clubberty—Why don't you write him back and tell him that you've been eight years to change your disposition?

Shunning Danger.
Chicago Times-Herald.
"No," said the man who wanted the meal. "I can't. I'm sorry too. I'd like to do work, but I'm afraid."
"What," the lady asked, "are you afraid of?"
"I'm afraid I might catch de habit. I never did have much control of myself dat way."

A Mysterious Achievement.
Washington Star.
"Do you believe there is such a thing as clairvoyance?" inquired the matter of fact friend.
"Well," answered the man who hesitates, "I won't say there is any such thing. But I do know this much: I saw a man go to a side of canvas to see how much he could eat, and every one of them was good to eat."

Gloating in the Gloaming.
Chicago Tribune.
"When you rejected me last evening," asked young Spoonman, "had you heard of Quicker's? That's my rich uncle. He cut me off with a shilling."
"No," she said, with tears of tender compassion in her eyes. "I had not. Believe me, my friend, I am so—"
"Well, he hasn't—and I've got another string."

Know-nothing.
I have know-sorry—therefore I may laugh with you, O friend, more earth than those who never sorrowed upon earth. And know no sorrow, I have know-sorry—therefore I may sorrow with you far more tenderly than those who never know how sad a thing seems certain to be so because they have never known it.

Theodora Garrison, in August Century.