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BABETTE.

Alone, and the golden waters
Are stippling to the West,
And the chime from St. Roche's belfry
Dies on the ocean's breast.
And the dimpled waves are rocking
The fishers' barks to rest.

"Babette! Babette!" the mother calls,
Far up above the strand,
"Bring in your father's nets, my child,
And lend your little hand
To turn the wheel, nor linger there
So long upon the strand."

The sun is sinking to the sea
In cris son robes and gold;
A chilly breath the evening stirs
And roughs her ringlets gold;
It feels to her like a farewell kiss
From lips now dead and cold.

The yellow light is on the wall,
The sea-wall old and gray
With weed and lichen mantled all
In sober-hued array.
The children on the pier above
Are laughing in their play.

The quaint, old, red-roofed clustered town
Looks down upon the wave;
That sea from which her wistful eye
Some answer seems to crave;
That sea which took her love away,
And gave him back a grave.

Oh, eyes that once so lightly laughed!
Oh, soul, that in his spell,
Once crushed with passionate kisses when
He held her on his heart,
That day she stood this wall beneath
To see her lover start!

To say again the last "godspeed,"
And wave her kerchief white,
And smile in hope—ah, God who raised
Those breakers wild and white,
And bade the tempest to arise
And rage that livelong night.

And smote the little quiv'ring bark,
And tore the planks in twain,
Deal gently with the broken heart
Of her who sit in vain
Poured out her soul in fervent prayer
Her love to see again.

Nay, not in vain. The morning dawned,
The sunshine glittered fair,
And hailed in light a shattered corpse,
A gleam of golden hair—
God only heard the cry of her
Who found him lying there.

—Scotsman.

THE VIGILANTS' MISTAKE.

BY JOHN THORNBURY.

I.

Frank Staples served in the cavalry during the rebellion, and went through the Valley with Sheridan. At the close of the war he left the service with an honorable discharge in his pocket—and very little else. He had achieved neither fame nor fortune. He had done a soldier's duty faithfully and intelligently. There were no politicians in his family. His father and uncles were men of strong convictions. They had kept the flag of freedom flying in the unpropitious days when it did not pay, but when the change came they were thrust aside by the howling dervishes of the eleventh hour. So Frank was neither promoted nor brevetted. There was Tom Tidier, who had two brevets thrust upon him—one for distinguished services in mustering the troops of the United States in, and the other for mustering them out. There were others of Frank's college chums who were brevetted for actions in which he was, but they were not.

It was imperative that he should do something for a livelihood. Going back to the legal studies he had abandoned a year before he would have been admitted to the bar was out of the question. Soldiering had spoiled him for any sedentary occupation. He could not stand the confinement of office work. He felt that he must find some pursuit which would give him plenty of exercise. A horse must necessarily be one of the tools of his new trade. He knew nothing of farming. Joe Hershish, who was much in the same position as Frank, suggested that the cattle trade was just the thing for them. Frank's uncle Asahel gave him $2000 as a "starter," Joe put in a like amount, and they went into the "cattle business."

In the spring of 186— Frank was on his way to meet his partner on the lower Rio Grande. Joe had gone into Texas to buy beef-cattle, which they intended to drive together to Colorado for a market. Frank was driving along slowly to cool his horse before watering him at the next stage station, where he intended resting for a few hours, and expending $1 50 for what is called dinner in those parts. He was about two miles from the ranch when he was accosted by a stranger mounted on a tough-looking "glass-eyed" Indian pony. The stranger was quite a good-looking fellow, six feet in his stockings, with a large fair face, great blue eyes, a profusion of light hair which he allowed to grow long, frontier fashion, to keep his ears from freezing in the wintry cold winds of the llanos. He had a magnificent flowing beard of the same color as his hair; it reached below his breast. His dress was not studied, but it was certainly picturesque. He wore a broad-brimmed sombrero of gray felt, with a band of red ribbon; a blue woolen shirt faced with red, with large mother of pearl buttons; trowsers of buckskin, with long fringes at the sides, and high boots armed with immense Mexican spurs. A long lariat of dressed hide was curled at his saddle bow. A broad leather belt, with a large silver buckle, supported two army revolvers and a bowie knife. The pistols hung one at each hip—the left with the stock to the front, the right with the stock to the rear—so as to be "jerked out" with the least possible trouble or delay. The bowie knife hung midway between the "six-shooters." Suspended from his wrist was an Indian whip. In short, his frontier "make-up" was unexceptionable.

The stranger was evidently a Texan. A finer specimen of physical manhood could not be found anywhere. He rode to Frank's side with a "howdy," cheery sort of a way, and bringing his horse to a halt, said, laughingly, "I tell yer what it is, stranger, yer must be a heap better rider than I be if yer kin ride with them almighty long stirrups."

Frank was not shocked by this abrupt opening of conversation. He had been long enough on the frontier to know that the children of the wilds are not in the habit of putting on gloves, either physically or metaphysically. "I like a very long stirrup," he answered: "I want my toe barely to touch it."

"I don't like a short stirrup, auther;" the stranger said, "but seems to me them's a'most too long, now, stranger."

"I fell into the habit of riding with a long stirrup in California, said Frank, "and have not been able to get over it since. In fact, the stirrup is of very little use to me. If a horse bolts, up he bolts, and I let go the stirrups." And suiting the action to the word, he drew his feet out of the stirrups. There was very little vanity in Frank's composition. If he could be considered vain on any point, however, that point was his horsemanship. The stranger had struck the right chord at the first touch.

"I reckon 'tain't onsafe, stranger," condescendingly rejoined he of the blonde beard.

"I haven't found it so."

"Now, don't yer find it a sorter fatiguin?"

"Not except on very long trips. But when I ride thirty miles or over, I usually take up a hole after dinner."

"I thought yer did, stranger—I thought yer did;" and he indulged in a sort of triumphant chuckle. "Now," he continued, "I've done a heap o' ridin' in my time—used to be a horsebreaker myself—and I tell yer, stranger, yer just take up them thar stirrups a little, and you'll ride a heap easier—see if yer don't."

There was silence between them for a moment. The free-and-easy companion broke it with: "Goin' to hev a bite up yonder?"

"Yes."

"Me too. Thunderin' poor hash! Scraps of jerked buffalo meat, warm dough and mud coffee. Have to pay for it, though—whew!" And he gave a long crescendo whistle.

"We must have something to stay our stomachs, whatever it may cost."

"Goin' to stay over, neighbor?"

"I think not. I shall probably lie by until three or four o'clock and then push on to Boggsville in the cool of the evening."

"You've got a pretty good pair o' shoes," "Yes," said Frank, looking his shoes over.

"Ah! dam it! none o' that!"

"Drop that darned thing!"

The two cocked revolvers almost touched Frank's head.

"Now, hand over that there six-shooter but foremost, there's a good little man."

"Will you have the goodness to tell me now, gentlemen, what is the meaning of all this?"

"Oh, you needn't play innocent; you know blamed well what it means."

"If you want money, I have no more than is necessary for my traveling expenses."

"We don't want yer money."

"Why, ahem, am I thus stopped on the public road, and my life threatened?"

"You'll find all that out when you get back to Boggsville."

"I don't want to go to Boggsville. I lose a valuable horse if I do not go on to Big Bend to-night."

They seemed to enjoy this last remark hugely: "You lose a horse, certainly, friend, but he ain't so derned valuable as he might be. But Dutch Bill will be glad enough to git him."

"Well, we can't stay here blabbin', all night. I'will take us till dark to git to Boggsville."

They tied Spectacles with lariats to their saddle bows, and permitted Frank, in consideration of his good conduct in the matter of surrender, they said, to ride the pony to the town. If he had been troublesome, they added, they would have made him walk all the way, if they had not "let daylight through him." They caused him to ride between them. A drawn revolver on either side made escape impossible, had he wished to attempt it. He did, not, however, for he was convinced the whole thing was a mistake, and must certainly be cleared up before long. As they rode on he told them his story. They evidently did not believe a word of it. When they reached the stage ranch, the lazy station keeper was leaning against the door in his usual position. Frank's captor's questioned him as to what he knew of the matter. His statement that Frank arrived at the house in company with another man, and that when he arrived he rode the same horse he was now riding, seemed to be conclusive with them.

"That settles it," said one whom Frank had heard addressed by his companion as "Nibbs." "Let us be moving."

"Settles what?" asked Frank, somewhat anxiously.

"That you're trying to stuff us with an infernal story about your horse bein' changed while in the stable here, when you came here ridin' the very animal you are straddlin' now."

"But I have explained how that occurred."

"Well, you can explain it to Dutch Bill, and see whether your explanation is satisfactory to him."

"Who is Dutch Bill, and what has he to do with me?"

"Oh, not much; only that's his pony yer ridin', and it was stole with two other horses late Tuesday night."

Frank saw his position now as if a flash of lightning had suddenly revealed it to him. He was arrested as a horse thief! Dutch Bill's pony was strong enough against him to convince an excited community of his guilt. He knew that suspected horse thieves got scant justice and short shrift. In an Eastern paper he had seen an account of the lynching of two men by infuriated citizens in the civilized State of Ohio, and he remembered that it was two years before the innocence of the victims was discovered. Then it was only by the confession on his deathbed of the perpetrator of the crime, who had aided in hanging the supposed culprits.

"Can't you tell an honest man from a thief?" cried Frank, turning indignantly toward his captors.

"I'll be derned ef I kin, now-a-days," replied Nibbs. "When I was younger I used to think I could, but I've met so many pious-looking derned thieves in my time that I don't go a cent on looks any more."

Three horsemen coming in on a trail from the east now hailed them.

"Jake," said Nibbs to his companion, "here's Big Steve's party. The horses your chum's got belong to Steve," he said, turning to Frank.

"The horse he has belongs to me," said Frank.

"Hain't you dropped that yet?" said Jake; "it's about time."

They halted to await the arrival of Big Steve.

"Hallo!" said Steve—he was the biggest of the party, so Frank supposed he must be Steve—"you've got something, ain't yer!"

"Dog-gon it!" said a second, "if that ain't Dutch Bill's glass eyed 'plug!'"

The new comers eyed poor Frank with no very friendly expression.

"Did you strike any trace of my animals?" asked Big Steve.

"Yes," answered Nibbs; and indicating Frank by a nod and a wink, he continued: "He's got a chum who has gone to the northward with the rest of the stock. He was goin' after him when we got him—unless it's a blind. Says his chum played sharp on him—took the best animals while this one was asleep, and left him Bill's old nag."

"What a derned scoundrel the other one must be!" said Steve.

"He's pretty sharp, anyhow." And they all laughed heartily at what they seemed to consider an excellent joke.

"If you push on right lively, Steve, you may git him somewhere about Big Bend. After his throw-off on his partner he'll feel pretty safe, and think he's blurred the trail."

"We'll git him if horseflesh and lead kin do it," said Steve. "Take care of yourselves." And Big Steve and his party put spurs to their horses and went off at a gallop.

"Shouldn't wonder if they got him, Nibs," said Jake.

"I hope to God they may!" said Frank.

"It won't save you, friend," said Nibbs. "But I s'pose misery loves company. He's treated you derned mean."

"Yes," said Jake, "he's played it on you pretty low down, and I don't wonder you'd like to know he was hanged, or sure to be, before you go up yourself."

"H'isted!"

The horrid word tolled through Frank's brain like a death-knell. The terrible figure of Judge Lynch, rope in hand, loomed up in gloomy horror before his mind's eye.

A sudden weakness came over him. He felt as if he wanted to lie down and rest and close his eyes. He feared he should fall from the saddle. By a great effort he shook off the feeling after a minute or two. He determined to meet his fate boldly, and take matters as coolly as it was possible for him to do.

CHAPTER II.

It was sunset when the party reached Boggsville. That new and thriving town consisted of about forty habitations, underground and overground, "dug-outs" and shanties of mud, wood and canvas. They stopped before a wooden structure which bore the following sign:

SALOON AND RESTORENT.

BY JACOB GRIMSLEY.

X—L—C—R.

They were soon surrounded by a crowd of curious spectators, men, women and children. These were very much excited, and proposed hanging "the horse-thief" at once, but Nibbs and Jake drew their revolvers and kept off the crowd. "Everything's got to be done on the square," said Jake. "He must have a fair trial before the committee. And he hasn't had his supper yet. You wouldn't hang a man on an empty stomach, would you?"

"You go on prings dare!" said a stout, dwarfish Dutchman with a scrubby red beard, who now approached the party.

"Your old glass-eyed plug, Bill," said Nibbs.

"Ah! py dunder! You dosh vell, Shake. Vare you gits him?"

"We got him between the stage-ranch and Big Bend. Dismount, friend, and go into the house with Nibbs. We'll have some supper presently."

"Ah! dish pe de Gott tam dief!" said Dutch Bill; and he approached Frank and tried to kick him. Frank caught his assailant's short, stumpy leg, and lifting it higher than his head, threw him over in a heap and lofty somersault, and as he revolved applied his boot vigorously to the broadest portion of the Dutchman's body. Bill gave a howl, loud and long, as he went to grass. A loud laugh followed his adventure.

"Served gran' right Bill," said Jake; "I want no more o' that. The man's behaved pretty well since he was tuck, even if he is a horse thief. He's in my charge now, and nobody must offer no violence to him, as long as I have the committee's orders."

"You're a pretty good saddle," said Nibbs to the speaker.

"Is yi tourn or yer shum'a!" he asked, with a roguish leer.

"Mine," answered Frank. "When the scoundrel who is the cause of my trouble changed horses he didn't change saddles."

"I s'pose," said Nibbs, "I might have the use of it until—a—you need it? You ain't likely to need it very soon, you know."

"You may use it till I need it," said Frank, who saw he had better make a virtue of necessity. It struck him, however, that if Nibbs were one of his judges he might be biased by the reflection that if Frank were acquitted he would reclaim the saddle.

"Here, Bill, take yer pony."

Dutch Bill, who by this time had picked himself up, came forward, rubbing his most prominent points. "I claims dat saddle pees on mein pony ven he pe stoles."

"You want another tumble, that's what you want," said Nibbs; "and I'm derned if I don't give you one if you don't take your old pony and clear out."

Supper was ready when they entered the house, and the table was pretty full. Frank was told to sit down and "eat hearty." Another member of the vigilance committee of Boggsville relieved Jake and Nibbs in charge of him. The sentinel stood over him while he ate. Frank astonished himself by making quite a good supper. He felt much better after he had eaten—stronger and more hopeful. He smoked a cigar he had left, and was soothed by the dreamy weed.

After everybody had had his evening smoke there was a consultation in a corner of the room, and then the guests dispersed. Nibbs told Frank his trial before the vigilance committee would take place immediately in the "city hall," and they "had better walk over there pretty soon." He conducted Frank for being discharged so soon after entering him that "it couldn't take long, nohow."

Frank was conducted by his guard, Nibbs and Jacob Grimsley, to the city hall, a crazy structure of boards—a mere shell without flooring or window frames. It was dimly lighted by a few very dirty tallow candles, which flickered in the wind, and, ominous sign, wrapped themselves all around with winding sheets. There was a considerable number of people in the "hall" when Frank and his guardians arrived, but it was some minutes before they commenced "business." A tall, red-headed individual in shirt sleeves and pipe in mouth entered. Nibbs told Frank it was Tom Boggs, the chairman of the committee, who was to preside as judge in his case. His appearance was not such as to inspire Frank with much confidence in his legal knowledge.

Tom Boggs took his judicial seat on a chair raised on an old counter at one end of the room. He called the assembly to order by three knocks on the counter with his boot heel. The other members of the committee, with the exception of Jake and Nibbs, composed "the jury," and sat on the counter on either side of the "judge." The secretary of the committee acted as clerk of the court.

"Mr. Secretary, what's the indictment ag'in the pris'ner?" asked Judge Boggs.

"Horse stealin'," answered the secretary.

"Let's hev the witnesses," said the judge.

Dutch Bill was first called.

"Now, Bill," said the judge, "you tell the truth, s'help yer God, and don't be long about it. Just tell us what yer know, and don't tell us nothin' yer don't know."

"So help mein Gott!" said Bill; "und how can I tell vat I don't knows, shoodge!"

"Well, don't go on jawin', but tell us what you know about this yere business," said Tom Boggs rather testily.

"Vat I knows? Some ham schountrel he shdeals mein bony."

"Don't be so free with your dams before the court," said Tom Boggs in an angry tone. "I's contempt, and I'll be damned if I stand it."

"I means no gondempt shoodge," said Bill, penitently.

"All right, then. Go ahead!"

One of the jurors—a little man with a head shaped like a pear, and a light, peaked beard—now rose, and with a countenance that denoted some very important communication, said, with impressive solemnity, "Mr. President, before we proceed any further I should like to ask one question."

Tom Boggs turned toward the speaker, upon whom all eyes were now fixed. "Well, then, ask it," said Tom.

Everybody waited in hushed expectation for something very weighty from the little man. "I should like to know," said he in a tone as solemn as a funeral bell, and looking around him with a self satisfied air, as if he were about to make an unanswerable point—"I should like to know if this yere court is legal."

Tom Boggs turned his back upon the speaker, and in a tone of contemptuous disappointment and disgust, ejaculated the pregnant monosyllable by which English brevity designates the infernal regions. Nearly every one present joined him in chorus. "I ain't shure, nor know," continued Boggs; and it don't make no difference, anyway. We ain't got any time to waste with such derned fool-nonsense. Go on, Bill."

The pear headed little man collapsed.

Bill went on with his story: "Vell, some dief he shdeals mein bony, and I sees him no more mudil to-night, ven Nipps and Shake gooms pack, und Nipps he say, 'Pill, here's your class-eyed blug; und he gives me de bony, put he keebs de battle und pritle."

"That ain't got no'hin' to do with it," interrupted Nibbs; "the saddle and bridle warn't stole."

"Vell, dey pess on mein bony."

"You be—"

Tom Bogg's boot heel struck the counter with a crash, and cut off the end of the sentence.

"Order!" he shouted, "or I'll hev to throw some o' you cusses out o' the winder."

"What else do you know about it, Bill?" asked the secretary.

"Vell, I knows nicht more apout dat."

"Prisoner, do you want to cross-examine the witness?" asked Judge Boggs.

"No," said the Frank in answer.

"Who's the next witness?"

"Me," said Nibbs.

"The evidence you shall give," etc.

"So help me God!"

"Howl away, then."

The committee allowed that me and Jake were the northern trail after the animals wuz stole. We fust struck tracks at the stage station, where two fellows took dinner. One of 'em, mounted on a fine sorrel, started right after dinner. The other one, who rode a glass-eyed calico pony, had only left a few moments before we got thar. So Jake and me we put spurs to our horses and lit out after him. We recognized the pony, from the station-keeper's description, to be Bill's old nag. We soon kem in sight of the prizeur thar makin' the liveliest tracks he could out of the four legs under him. We hailed him, and he turned round and seed us, and he didn't go no slower, I kin tell you. Then I sent a bullet after him, and that stopped him, and he turned round and fired at us. We got up to him before he could fire again, and tuck him. Then he told us a dog-goned fool story, as how the other one stole his horse and left him this hoss he was agoin' after him then. But we told him it wuz too thin. And the station keeper told us how he kem to the ranch on a calico, and the other one was mounted on a sorrel."

A timid member of the jury mildly suggested that what the station keeper said was only hearsay. Judge Boggs decided that as the station keeper saw the prisoner come in on the pony, his story was not hearsay. He asked Frank if he wished to cross-examine the witness.

Frank said, "The witness states that I fired at him. He has my pistol. Let him produce it, and it will be seen that no shot was fired from it."

The pistol was demanded and produced. There were six loads in it; it had not been discharged.

"Well, that beats cock-fightin! I could ha' sworn on a ten-foot Bibleoath I heard the report and the whizz of the bullet," said Nibbs.

Judge Boggs decided, however, that as "the cap had been snapped it wasn't the prisoner's fault that he didn't shoot," and the will must be taken for the deed.

"No more witness."

"Hear!" said Jake Grimsley.

Jake's story was much the same as Nibbs', except that he had no report and no whiz of bullets. Frank declined to ask him any questions.

"Any more witnesses?"

"No more witness."

"I would suggest," said the timid but evidently conscientious juror who had made the objection in regard to hearsay evidence, "that no proof has been offered that the prisoner has stolen any property, nor has the stolen property been identified."

This suggestion created considerable commotion. It was remarked that the timid juror was always "crotchety" and "notional"—that there was "too derned much law about this business."

Tom Boggs gave the counter three vigorous kicks. He jumped to his feet and roared "Silence!" The hubbub ceased. "I'll make it a personal manner," shouted Tom, "with the first man that talks before his jaw is wanted. Justice must be done accordin' to Hoyle. Let the property be brought in and identified."

Dutch Bill was sent for his pony, and immediately returned with the animal. The glass-eyed put his head in at the door, stared, snorted and started back affrighted, dragging Dutch Bill precipitately after him. The judge was informed that all efforts to induce the property to appear for identification were fruitless.

"Well," said the Judge Boggs, "if the pony won't come in, the jury will have to go out to see the pony."

The jury went out, and presently returned.

"Bill," asked the judge, "is the pony the jury seen your pony?"

"Yes, shoodge."

"Nibbs and Jake, is it the same pony you found in company with the prisoner?"

"It is."

"Prisoner, have you anything to say?"

"Very little. I do not acknowledge the right of any such gathering as this to try me for anything, or to pass sentence on me."

Frank then told his story plainly and in as few words as possible.

"Now, look here, my friend," said Boggs, "even if this yere sock an' a bull story wuz true, it wouldn't make no difference. The law ain't made for the protection of derned fools, and I leave it to the committee if there could be dern'der fool than you wuz, accordin' to your own showin'."

"That's so!" in chorus from the jury.

"I have nothing further to say," returned Frank, "except that I protest against everything you have done and everything you may do."

"Now, then, gentlemen of the jury, to settle the matter without any more talk, sich of yer as air of opinion that the prisoner is guilty will say 'Ay.'"

"Ay!" in chorus from the jury, and voices from all parts of the room in addition.

"The contrary, 'No.'"

A dead silence.

"The ays hev it. Pris'ner, you'll be hung to morrow at—. Le's see; what time would be most convenient to everybody?"

"I'm agoin' over the Mulberry creek in the mornin' after ducks," said one, "and I mayn't be back before eleven."

"I'd like to hev a crack at 'em myself," said Judge Boggs. "How will noon do?"

"First rate!" said several voices.

"Well, then, you'll be hung to-morrow at noon, wind and weather permittin'."

"Judge," said an Irish vigilant who had answered to the name of Dan O'Connell, "I'd loike to ax the pris'nur wan question."

"All right, Dan! Fire away, my boy."

"Pris'nur r," said Dan, looking very solemnly at Frank, "are yez ready to doy?"

"No," answered Frank.

Tom turned toward Tom Boggs, and with the air of one who makes an irresistible expostulation, "Judge," said he—"Judge, is it right fur to hang a man whin he's not ready for to doy?"

"Dan," said Tom Boggs, "you're a bigger fool than I thought you wuz, and that's sayin' a good deal. It don't make a d—d bit of difference whether he's ready or not; he's got to swing. And now I'm ready for a hand at whisky poker."

The crowd dispersed, and Frank was taken back to Jake Grimsley's.

III.

"I suppose you're pretty well played after to-day's work," said Jake to Frank after they had got back to the house.

"I am rather tired," replied Frank; "though I am much more inclined to be after what I have gone through. I feel sleepy enough to lie down, however, but I have several letters to write first."

"You'd better go to bed and try to sleep now," said Jake; "you'll have plenty of time to morrow. I don't expect you'll be able to attempt to leave before the afternoon and the forenoon before you."

"All the morning," and the forenoon to boot, did not seem such a wonderfully long time to poor Frank, but he was very weary, and took Jake's advice. Jake showed him a bed in an inner room. A guard of Vigilants was detailed to watch him during the night; they were to relieve each other every two hours. The sentinel sat in the doorway. A light was left on the floor, so as not to offend Frank's eyes with its glare, but at the same time to enable the sentinel to see him.

Frank had always kept up his childhood's habit of praying before going to bed. He prayed fervently that night for a deliverance from the fate that hung over him. He begged God to spare his mother the grief of losing her firstborn by such a death as now seemed almost inevitable.

The house was soon wrapped in silence, and Frank was left to his own thoughts. The idea of an attempt to escape flashed upon him. He looked about the room, but it offered no opportunity. The thought of overpowering the sentinel presented itself. He looked toward the man on guard, but the glance of the latter fell full upon him. His eye met Frank's and Frank could see that the man divined his thoughts. There were no hope here.

Great God in heavens! If he only had a weapon! What a treasure even a little chloroform would be! The hope of evading his guardians in the morning on his way to—merciful God! on his way to the gallows—it is madness to entertain. If he had a weapon he might make a fight, compel them to shoot him in their own defense, and thus avoid the disgraceful death before him. But what disgrace is there in any form of death if that death is undeserved? Yet he would avoid that form of death if he could. He would beg them to shoot him—to give him the death of a soldier, not of a criminal. Then came a rage against his would-be murderers seized upon him. They should not hang him! If he had no weapons, he would use his hands as a wild beast his claws, and he would tear them limb from limb. Then despondency came upon him, and a despairing consciousness that the most furious struggles would be of no avail.

To think that he was to die to-morrow! One minute in full health and strength, and the next—dead. Dead! To see the showers of April falling, and to think that he should never see the flowers of May. To think of his friends depositing his body in the ground! To think of his mother! To be hung by mistake! At the thought of his poor mother the tears ran down his cheeks. Was it for this she reared so tenderly her earliest child? And Ellen, his beloved and betrothed, and Mary, his sister! "What are they doing now? Perhaps reading my letters and planning how soon they shall celebrate my return in the fall—a return that will never take place. Will the shock kill them when they hear the fatal news? It will certainly be my mother's death-stroke. And then the horrid announcement that I was hung as a horse thief by a vigilance committee! Will they believe me guilty? No, I know they will not. But will the world believe it? Ah, I am not so sure of the world. The vigilance committee will make the case against me as strong as possible to justify their crime. No doubt the world will believe that I am a horse thief. The world is always so ready to believe evil. Even my so called friends and my acquaintances will believe it, and will hear of the imputed crime of their old companion with a complacent feeling of self-righteousness." Poor Frank! His conscience told him now that he too had not been too slow to believe evil of his fellows.

The scene of the coming morning cast its shadow before it. He saw his body hanging limp and lifeless from the gallows tree, his head on one side, his face purpled, his eyes glaring, but sightless, his tongue black and protruded. He buried his tear-wet face in the pillow in agony of horror and despair. He saw his corpse lying on the ground as little regarded as the carcass of a dead wolf. He saw it thrust, coffinless and prayerless, into the unhallowed earth of that region of thieves and murderers.

And the after-death! What was that to be? Was there any after death? Was he merely to be thereafter a brother to the insensible clod? Was noon to-morrow—Heavens! it is already to-day!—was noon to be the end-all of the being known as Frank Staples? Or was an infinite punishment reserved for the errors of a poor finite existence? He was not an irreligious man, but he was not prone to displays of piety. According to the standard of some formal church-goers he could not be considered a religious man, or, in their sense of the word, a Christian. Could it be possible that because he disregarded forms and formularies he was now to be condemned forever and ever to burning torments and demoniac companionship? "No!" he thought, "God is too good, too merciful, and—yes—too just to heap such tortures on his poor creature atoms." He whispered the only prayer his mind in its perturbed state would furnish him: "My God, have mercy on me! my God, have mercy on me!" and he continued to repeat it incessantly until exhausted Nature gave way and he fell into a heavy, trance-like sleep.

IV.

It was after sunrise when Nibbs and Jake came into the room and awoke Frank.

"I wish I may be skinned if you don't take it easy!" said Nibbs. "I should ha' thought you'd be up to see the sun rise this morning."

"How do you feel, old man?" asked Jake in a kindly tone.

"I feel pretty well," replied Frank—"much better than I should have thought possible."

The daylight seemed to do him good, the sun to give him strength. The despair of the previous night had passed away. He felt a reaction from his past depression, and determined, in all outward appearances at least, to die like a man.

"I swear he don't want for pluck, Nibbs," said Jake.

"Not much," was the reply of Nibbs.

"Now," said Jake, "what would you like for breakfast this morning? If there's anything you'd like, and it kin be got in Boggsville, you're bound to hev it, and no extra charge." Jake's voice trembled slightly as he asked the question.

There was evidently a soft spot somewhere in Jake's heart. This slight evidence of kindly feeling touched Frank deeply, and brought him nearer than anything that occurred that day to breaking down in his resolve to meet his fate without a visible sign of emotion.

"I am very much obliged to you, Mr. Grimsley," said he.

"Oh, pshaw!" said Mr. G. "We ain't in the habit of putting on frills yere. You might call me Jake."

"Well, Jake, I thank you very much indeed. But anything will do. Pens, ink and paper are what I want most. I have writing enough before me to occupy the rest of—of—my time."

"You shall hev them," said Jake; "but you must give in to the little breakfast arrangement. The old woman kinder insists upon it, and she got to hev her own way."

"Very well. Tell her I am very grateful for her kindness, and leave it all to her."

Frank washed and dressed himself quickly. Jake brought him pens, ink and paper, and he went to work at once to write to his mother and Ellen. Ellen and he were to have been married after his return in the fall. Jake's wife, a comely, kindly looking woman, brought him an excellent breakfast. "I thought," said she, "you mightn't care to go to the public room this mornin', so I brought you a bite here."

"You are very kind, Mrs. Grimsley," said Frank, and I thank you from my heart."

"Don't mention it," said she. "Tain't nothin'; I only wish it was better. You hain't got so many breakfasts to eat now that you can afford to eat a poor one. I'm sorry for your trouble—indeed I am."

"Thank you, thank you!"

"I told Jake to try and stop this thing; but he says it's more than life's worth to attempt it. I told them they're a pack of fools. I says: 'He ain't no horse-thief, he ain't, bad as appearances is agin him. Can't I tell it when I see him?'"

"God bless you for your good opinion, Mrs. Grimsley! It is correct."

"I know it," said she. "But what kin I do? I've scolded all of 'em, from Tom Boggs down. He 'lowed they're terribly excited about this horse stealin'; they've lost so many animals lately they're determined to hang somebody. They ain't very particular as to whether they hang the right man or not, but they're bound to make an example."

"I suppose you can do nothing to stop this miserable business. But you can do me a last favor by taking charge of some letters and papers I shall leave with you, and seeing that they are forwarded to their proper address."

"I'll do it," she said. And the kind hearted woman left the room with her apron to her eyes.

Frank did but scant honor to the more solid portions of Mrs Grimsley's excellent breakfast, but he emptied the coffee pot. He wrote to his partner, giving instructions as to the disposal of his portion of the profits of their venture, and regarding the general arrangement of their affairs. He made his will, leaving everything he possessed to his mother and his sister Mary.

When he had finished writing and paid his hotel bill, he placed his letters, papers and money in Mrs. Grimsley's hands. A posse of Vigilants arrived and informed him that it was "close on to twelve o'clock, and everything was ready." Frank rose at their summons, but felt so weak and dizzy that he had to resume his seat. Grimsley asked him in a whisper if he would like a little brandy. He answered "Yes." When the brandy was brought, however, he declined to drink it. He felt that it would be cowardly to borrow factitious strength. He determined to die with an unclouded intellect, in the full possession of his faculties.

The feeling of weakness was only momentary. As there seemed no way of avoiding his fate he braced himself up to meet it calmly and courageously. He shook hands with Mrs. Grimsley, thanked her for her kindness and bade her good-bye. The good soul cried like a child.

Frank was then conducted to an open space, a kind of common, where was already collected almost every man, woman and child in Boggsville. The branch of a dead tree furnished a gallows. A rope hung ominously from the limb, under which stood a cart to serve for a platform. The Vigilants, to the number of twenty, formed a circle around the gallows. Outside the circle stood the spectators. Frank was taken from his guards and marched slowly around it to give everybody an opportunity of viewing him closely. He was then led to the cart under the dead cottonwood.

He asked if there was a doctor present.

"Yer ain't sick, air yer?" asked Tom Boggs.

"No," answered Frank.

"Then what do you want a doctor for?"

"Reckon he don't want this yere business botched," suggested Nibbs.

Frank nodded.

"Well," said Tom, "we ain't got no doctor yere. But Dutch Bill can do what yer want, I guess. He's a butcher by trade."

Frank closed his eyes for a moment and remained silent. He was now told that prayer would be offered by a "reverend" member of the committee. This announcement annoyed Frank. He did not want the prayers of any "reverend" member of a community of murderers. He wished his sufferings ended as soon as possible.

The reverend gentleman was attired in a full suit of "butternut." He had a hard, unprepossessing face; there was little charity in the lines about his lips. He approached Frank and asked him, "Are you a Kentuckian?"

"I hope so," humbly answered poor Frank.

"I tur-nat that before you quit this miserable world you will pur-oclaim yourself a Kur-istian. But-etheren, let us pur-ay that our erring bur-other may be moved to confess his our-ime and pur-oclaim himself a Kur istian before it is too late."

The reverend member then poured forth a turgid flood of pious "buncombe" in a nasal howl which grated terribly on poor Frank's highly strung nerves. It seemed to him interminable. It was finally interrupted, however, by Frank was roused from the state of semi-unconsciousness into which he was falling by the arrival of a horseman who rode into the circle. Frank heard the name of "Jack Eastman" pronounced.

Jack Eastman! Why, Jack and he were schoolmates years ago. The man's back was turned to Frank as he sat on his horse talking to the people around him.

"Who is that man?" Frank asked of Nibbs, who was one of the guard placed over him.

"The man that's just rode in!"

"Yes! Yes!"

"That's Jack Eastman, vice president of the committee."

"Will you tell him, like a good fellow, that I would like to say a word to him?"

"Certainly," replied Nibbs; and he went and spoke to the man he called Jack Eastman. The latter immediately turned his horse and rode to where Frank stood leaning against the cart. It was Jack Eastman, Frank's old schoolmate, thank God! Jack was somewhat changed by exposure and hardship of frontier life, but Frank would have recognized him anywhere.

"What have you got to say to me?" asked Jack in rather a hard tone.

"Jack," cried Frank, "is it possible you have forgotten me?"

"What! Why, it's Frank Staples! What the devil does all this mean?"

"It means," said Frank, "that I about to be made the innocent victim of a terrible mistake." He then told Jack his story in as few words as possible.

"It's devilish lucky I got back so soon," said Jack; then, turning toward his brethren of the committee, "Gentlemen," continued he, "this must be a mistake. This man is no horse thief. I know him and every one belonging to him. We were raised almost next door to each other."

"Vat tifference dat makes!" asked Dutch Bill, "he dakes mein pony all de same."

"I tell you what it is, fellows," said Jack, "you are going too fast in this business. You must take more time."

This seemed to cause considerable dissatisfaction among the Vigilants. An excited discussion was interrupted, however, by the arrival of Big Steve's party, bringing with them Frank's blue-eyed, blond-bearded deceiver, and Little Phil and the other stolen animals.

"Jack," said Frank, "there's my horse, and there's the man who stole him."

"Yes," said Big Steve, "he's owned up. *His* story," nodding to Frank, "is O. K."

"Stranger," said the horse thief to Frank, "I played it on a mighty mean trick yesterday, and I'm sorry for it. I guess you've had a hard time through my d—d meanness. But I'm glad it ain't too late to keep 'em from hangin' the wrong man."

After a short consultation among the Vigilants, Tom Boggs informed Frank that his innocence was established to the satisfaction of all concerned, and he was free to go wherever he pleased.

Frank nodded in reply; he was unable to speak. He staggered toward Little Phil, who hailed him with a joyous neigh of recognition. His overwrought nerves gave way; he fell against the horse and became insensible.

When Frank came back to consciousness he was lying on a bed in Jack Eastman's house. Jake Grimsley, Nibbs and Jack were seated by the bed.

"I told yer he'd come to pretty soon," said Nibbs.

"How are you now, old fellow," asked Jack, taking Frank's hand in his.

"A little weak, Jack, but pretty well—strong enough to travel."

"Stuff!" said Jack. "You're going to stay with me for a month to come."

Frank shook his head.

"Why," said Nibbs, "you ain't going away until you see the fun out!"

"Thank you," replied Frank, "I can't see any fun in it. The joke came too near being against me."

Jack tried hard to make Frank stay at least few days with him. But Frank was inflexible. Boggsville was hateful to him; the air of the place seemed to choke him. He left Boggsville about sunset the same evening. As he rode out of the village he saw the body of the blonde-bearded, blue-eyed horse thief dangling from the limb of the dead tree. He shuddered when he thought how near he had come to dangling there instead of the thief.—*Lippincott's.*

A Remarkable Missionary Printer.

One of the most eminent of her sons returned yesterday, after a long absence, to visit his native city, Utica. Samuel Wells Williams was born in Utica in September, 1812, and for more than a generation now has ranked among the foremost of Chinese scholars, until it is no exaggeration to rank him at the head of them. He attended the Rensellaer Institute, in Troy, but much of his training was in the printing office of his father, William Williams, in this city, from which graduated some of the brightest and most useful men that this community has ever known. He was early imbued with the missionary spirit, and went to Canton as missionary printer under appointment of the American board, landing in the foreign land he was so much to serve on the day before he became twenty-one years of age. Knowledge of the Chinese language was essential to him, and he devoted himself enthusiastically to its study. He assisted Dr. Bridgman in editing the *Chinese Repository*, a monthly publication, and a "Chinese Chrestomathy," of which he wrote about one-third. He published "Easy Lessons in Chinese," an English and Chinese vocabulary, and a Chinese commercial guide. All this he accomplished within about two years, besides making excursions into the study of Japanese, and translating into that language the book of Genesis and Matthew's gospel.

In 1844, he started upon a visit to America by way of Egypt, Syria and Europe, and in this country delivered a series of lectures, for the purpose of paying for a font of Chinese type, to be cast in Berlin. These lectures attracted general attention, and became the basis of the standard work, the "Middle Kingdom," which substituted accuracy and veracity for romance and fiction in Western views of the Celestial Empire. The work earned for the author the title of LL. D. from Union College, and gave him an enduring literary reputation. In 1848 he returned to China, to his position as missionary printer, and to the editorship of the *Chinese Repository*. When Commodore Perry made his famous treaty with China, Mr. Williams was the American best qualified to serve as interpreter, and in that capacity he accompanied the expedition and won high recommendation for his skill and tact and fidelity. This