THE THREE PARTNERS;

Or,

The Big Strike on Heavy Tree Hill.

By BRET HARTE.

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CHAPTER V.—CONTINUED.

But Mr. Van Loo did not immediately seek Mrs. Barker. He had already some experience of that lady's nerves and irascibility on the drive, and had begun to see his error in taking so dangerous an impediment to his flight from the country. And another idea had come to him. He had already effected his purpose of compromising her with him in that flight, but it was still known only to few. If he left her behind for the foolish, doting husband, would not that devoted man take her back to avoid a scandal, and even forbear to pursue him for his financial irregularities? What were $20,000 of Mrs. Barker's money to the scandal of Mrs. Barker's elopement? Again, the failure to realize the forgery had left him safe, and Barker was sufficiently potent with the bank and Demorest to hush up that, also. Hamlin was now the only obstacle to his flight, but even he would scarcely pursue him if Mrs. Barker were left behind. And it would be easier to elude him if he did.

In his preoccupation Van Loo did not see that he had entered the barroom, but, finding himself there, he moved toward the bar; a glass of spirits would revive him. As he drank it he saw that the room was full of rough men, apparently miners or packers—some of them Mexican, with here and there a Kanaka or Australian. Two men more ostentatiously clad, though apparently on equal terms with the others, were standing in the corner with their backs toward him. From the general silence as he entered he imagined that he had been the subject of conversation, and that his altercation with Hamlin had been overheard. Suddenly one of the two men turned and approached him. To his consternation he recognized Steptoe—Steptoe, whom he had not seen for five years until last night, when he had avoided him in the courtyard of the Boomville hotel. His first instinct was to retreat, but it was too late. And the spirits had warmed him into temporary recklessness.

"You ain't goin' to be backed down by a short-card gambler, are yer?" said Steptoe, with coarse familiarity.

"I have a lady with me, and am pressed for time," said Van Loo, quickly. "He knows it, otherwise he would not have dared——"

"Well, look here," said Steptoe, roughly, "I ain't particularly sweet on you, as you know, but I and these gentlemen," he added, glancing around the room, "ain't particularly sweet on Mr. Jack Hamlin neither, and we kalkilate to stand by you if you say so. Now, I reckon you want to get away with the woman, and the quicker the better, as you're afraid there'll be somebody after you afore long. That's the way it pans out, don't it? Well, when you're ready to go, and you just tip us the wink, we'll get in a circle round Jack and cover him, and if he starts after you we'll send him on a little longer journey! Eh, boys?"

The men muttered their approval, and one or two drew their revolvers from their belts. Van Loo's heart, which had leaped at first at this proposal of help, sank at this failure of his little plan of abandoning Mrs. Barker. He hesitated and then stammered: "Thank you! Haste is everything with us now, but I shouldn't mind leaving the lady among chivalrous gentlemen like yourselves for a few hours only, until I could communicate with my friends and return to properly chastise this scoundrel."

Steptoe drew in his breath with a slight whistle and gazed at Van Loo. He instantly understood him. But the plea did not suit Steptoe, who, for purposes of his own, wished to put Mrs. Barker beyond her husband's possible reach. He smiled grimly. "I think you'd better take the woman with you," he said. "I don't think," he added in a lower voice, "that the boys would like your leaving her. They're very high-toned, they are!" he concluded ironically.

"Then," said Van Loo with another desperate idea, "could you not let us have saddle horses instead of the buggy? We could travel faster, and in the event of pursuit and anything happening to me," he added loftily, "she at least could escape her pursuer's vengeance."

This suited Steptoe equally well, as long as the guilty couple fled together, and in the presence of witnesses. But he was not deceived by Van Loo's heroic suggestion of self-sacrifice. "Quite right," he said sarcastically, "it shall be done, and I've no doubt one of you will escape. I'll send the horses round to the back door, and keep the buggy in front. That will keep Jack there, too—with the boys handy."

But Mr. Hamlin had quite as accurate an idea of Mr. Van Loo's methods and of his own standing with Steptoe's gang of roughs as Mr. Steptoe himself. More than that, he also had a hold on a smaller but more devoted and loyal following than Steptoe's. The employees and hostlers of the hotel worshipped him. A single word of inquiry revealed to him the fact that the buggy was not going on, but that Mr. Van Loo and Mrs. Barker were—on two horses, a temporary but quite saddle having been constructed out of a mule's pack tree. At which Mr. Hamlin, with his usual audacity, walked into the barroom, and, going to the bar, leaned carelessly against it. Then, turning to the lowering faces around him, he said, with a flash of his white teeth, "Well, boys, I'm calculating to leave the 'Divide' in a few minutes for some friends in the buggy, and it seems to me only the square thing to stand the liquor for the crowd, without prejudice to any feeling or roughness there may be agin me. Everybody who knows me knows that I'm generally there when the band plays, and I'm pretty sure to turn up for that sort of thing. So you'll just consider that I've had a good game on the 'Divide,' and I'm reckoning it's only fair to leave a little of it behind me here to 'sweeten the pot' until I call again. I only ask you, gentlemen, to drink success to my friends in the buggy as early and as often as you can." He flung two gold pieces on the counter and paused smilingly.

He was right in his conjecture. Even the men who would have willingly "held him up" a moment after, at the bidding of Steptoe, saw no reason for declining a free drink without prejudice." And it was a part of the irony of the situation that Steptoe and Van Loo were also obliged to participate to keep in with their partisans. It was, however, an opportune diversion to Van Loo, who managed to get nearer the door leading to the back entrance of the hotel, and to Mr. Jack Hamlin, who was watching him, as the men closed up to the bar.

The toast was drunk with acclamation, followed by another and yet another. Steptoe and Van Loo, who had kept their heads cool, were both wondering if Hamlin's intention was to intoxicate and incapacitate the crowd at the crucial moment, and Steptoe smiled grimly over his superior knowledge of their alcoholic capacity. But suddenly there was the greater diversion of a shout from the road, the oncoming of a cloud of red dust, and the halt of another vehicle before the door. This time it was no jaded single horse and dust-stained buggy, but a double team of four spirited trotters, whose coats were scarcely turned with foam, before a light station wagon containing a single man. But that man was instantly recognized by every one of the outside loungers and stable boys as well as the staring crowd within the saloon. It was James Stacy, the millionaire and banker. No one but himself knew that he had covered half the distance of a night-long ride from Boomville in two hours. But before they could voice their astonishment Stacy had thrown a letter to the obsequious landlord, and then gathering up the reins had sped away to the railway station half a mile distant.

"Looks as if the boss of creation was in a hurry," said one of the gazers in the doorway. "Somebody goin' to get smashed, sure."

"More like as if he was just hustlin' himself to keep from getting smashed," said Steptoe. "The bank hasn't got over the effect of their smart deal in the wheat trust. Everything they had in their hands tumbled yesterday in Sacramento. Men like me and you ain't goin' to trust their money to be 'jockeyed' with in that style. Nobody but a man with a swelled head like Stacy would have even dared to try it on. And now, by G—d! he's got to pay for it."

The harsh, exultant tone of the speaker showed that he had quite forgotten Van Loo and Hamlin in his superior hatred of the millionaire, and both men noticed it. Van Loo edged still nearer to the door as Steptoe continued. "Ever since he made that big strike on Heavy Tree five years ago the country hasn't been big enough to hold him. But mark my words, gentlemen, the time ain't far off when he'll find a two-foot ditch again and a pick and grub wages room enough and to spare for him and his kind of cattle."

"You're not drinking," said Jack Hamlin cheerfully.

Steptoe turned toward the bar and then started. "Where's Van Loo?" he demanded of Jack sharply.

Jack jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "Gone to hurry up his girl, I reckon. I calculate he ain't got much time to fool away here."

Steptoe glanced suspiciously at Jack. But at the same moment they were all startled—even Jack himself—at the apparition of Mrs. Barker passing hurriedly along the veranda before the windows in the direction of the still waiting buggy. "D—n it!" said Steptoe in a fierce whisper to the man next him. "Tell her not there—at the back door!" But before the messenger reached the door there was a sudden rattle of wheels, and with one accord all except Hamlin rushed to the veranda, only to see Mrs. Barker driving away alone. Steptoe turned back into his room, but Jack also had disappeared.

For in the confusion created at the sight of Mrs. Barker, he had slipped to the back door and found, as he suspected, only one horse, and that with a side saddle on. His intuitions were right. Van Loo, when he disappeared from the saloon, had instantly fled, taking the other horse and abandoning the woman to her fate. Jack as instantly leaped upon the remaining saddle and dashed after him. Presently he caught a glimpse of the fugitive in the distance, heard the half-angry, half-ironical shouts of the crowd at the back door, and as he reached the hilltop saw, with a mingling of satisfaction and perplexity, Mrs. Barker on the other road still driving frantically in the direction of the railway station. At which Mr. Hamlin halted, threw away his encumbering saddle, and, good rider that he was, remounted the horse, barebacked but for his blanket pad, and thrusting his knees in the loose girths, again dashed forward, with such good results that, as Van Loo galloped up to the stage-coach office at the next station and was about to enter the waiting coach for Marysville, the soft hand of Mr. Hamlin was laid on his shoulder.

"I told you," said Jack blandly, "that I had plenty of time. I would have been here before, and even overtaken you, only you had the better horse and knew how to ride."

Van Loo recoiled. But he was now desperate and reckless. Beckoning Jack out of earshot of the other passengers, he said with tightened lips: "Why do you follow me? What is your purpose in coming here?"

"I thought," said Hamlin dryly, "that I was to have the pleasure of getting satisfaction from you for the insult you gave me."

"Well, and if I apologize for it, what then?" he said quickly.

Hamlin looked at him quietly. "Well, I think I also said something about the lady being the wife of a friend of mine."

"And I have left her behind. Her husband can take her back without disgrace, for no one knows of her flight but you and I. Do you think your shooting me will save her? It will spread the scandal far and wide. For I warn you that, as I have apologized for what you choose to call my personal insult, unless you murder me in cold blood without witness, I shall let them know the reason of your quarrel. And I can tell you more; if you only succeed in stopping me here, and make me lose my chance of getting away, the scandal to your friend will be greater."

Mr. Hamlin looked at Van Loo curiously. There was a certain amount of conviction in what he said. He had never met this kind of creature before. He had surpassed even Hamlin's first intuition of his character. He amused and interested him. But Mr. Hamlin was also a man of the world and knew that Van Loo's reasoning might be good. He put his hands in his pockets and said, "What is your little game?"

Van Loo had been seized with another inspiration of desperation. Steptoe had been partly responsible for this situation. He knew that Jack and he were not friends. He had certain secrets of Steptoe's that might be of importance to Jack. Why should he not try to make friends with this powerful free lance and half-outlaw?

"It's a game," he said, significantly, "that might be of interest to your friends to hear."

Hamlin took his hands out of his pockets, turned on his heel, and said, "Come with me."

"But I must go by that coach now," said Van Loo, desperately, "or——I've told you what would happen."

"Come with me," said Jack, coolly. "If I'm satisfied with what you tell me I'll put you down at the next station an hour before that coach gets there."

"You swear it?" said Van Loo, hesitatingly.

"I've said it," returned Jack. "Come," and Van Loo followed Mr. Hamlin into the hotel.

CHAPTER VI.

The abrupt disappearance of Jack Hamlin and the strange lady and gentleman visitors was scarcely noticed by the other guests of the "Divide House," and beyond the circle of Steptoe and his friends, who were a distinct party and strangers to the town, there was no excitement. Indeed, the hotel proprietor might have confounded them together, and, perhaps, Van Loo was not far wrong in his belief that their identity had not been suspected. Nor were Steptoe's followers very much concerned in an episode in which they had taken part only at the suggestion of their leader, and which had terminated so tamely. That they would have liked a "row," in which Jack Hamlin would have been incidentally forced to disgorge his winnings, there was no doubt, but that their interference had been prompted to gratify some personal spite of Steptoe's against Van Loo was equally plain to them. There was some grumbling and outspoken criticism of his methods.

This was later made more obvious by the arrival of another guest for whom Steptoe and his party were evidently waiting. He was a short, stout man, whose heavy red beard was trimmed a little more carefully than when he was first known to Steptoe as "Alky Hall," the drunkard of Heavy Tree Hill. His dress, too, exhibited a marked improvement in quality and style, although still characterized in the waist and chest by the signs of the freedom of portly and slovenly middle age. Civilization had restricted his potations, or limited them to certain festivals known as "sprees," and his face was less puffy and sodden. But with the accession of sobriety he had lost his good humor, and had the irritability and the nervous restraint of reform.

"Ye needn't ladle out any of your forty-rod whiskey to me," he said querulously to Steptoe, as he filed out with the rest of the party through the barroom into the adjacent apartment. "I want to keep my head level till our business is over, and I reckon it would n't hurt you and your gang to do the same. They're likely to blab and there are few doors that whiskey won't unlock," he added, as Steptoe turned the key in the door after the party had entered.

The room had evidently been used for meetings of directors or political caucuses, and was round it with a table covered with inked and whittled armchairs and a single long deal table, on which were ink and pens. The men sat down around it with a half-embarrassed, half-contemptuous attitude of formality, their bent brows and isolated looks showing little community of sentiment or sociability, and an attempt to veil that individual selfishness that was prominent. Still less was there any essay of companionship or sympathy in the manner of Steptoe as he suddenly rapped on the table with his knuckles. "Gentlemen," he said with a certain deliberation of utterance, as if he enjoyed his own coarse directness. "I reckon you all have a sort of general idea what brought you here. Leastways, or you wouldn't be here. But you may or may not know that for the present you are honest, hard-working miners—the backbone of the State of California—and that you have formed yourselves into a company called the 'Blue Jay,' and you've settled yourselves on the bar below Heavy Tree Hill, on a deserted claim of the Marshall brothers, not half a mile from where the big strike was made five years ago. That's what you are, gentlemen; that's what you'll continue to be until the job's finished; and," he added with a sudden dominance that they all felt, "the man who forgets it will have to reckon with me. Now," he continued, resuming his former ironical manner, "now, what are the cold facts of the case? The Marshalls worked this claim ever since '49, and never got anything out of it; then they dropped off or died out, leaving only one brother, Tom Marshall, to work what was left of it. Well, a few days ago he found 'indications' of a big lead in the rock, and instead of rushin' out and yellin' like an honest man, and callin' in the boys to drink, he sneaks off to 'Frisco, and goes to the bank to get 'em to take a hand in it. Well, you know, when Jim Stacy takes a hand in anything, it's both hands, and the bank wouldn't see it until he promised to guarantee possession of the whole abandoned claim—'dips, spurs, and angles'—and let them work the whole thing, which the d——d fool did, and the bank agreed to send an expert down there to-morrow to report. But while he was away some one on our side, who was an expert also, got wind of it and made an examination all by himself, and found it was a vein sure enough and a big thing, and some one else on our side found out, too, all that Marshall had promised the bank, and what the bank had promised him. Now, gentlemen, when the bank sends down that expert to-morrow I expect that he will find you in possession of every part of the deserted claim except the spot where Tom is working."

"And what good is that to us?" asked one of the men, contemptuously.

"Good?" repeated Steptoe harshly. "Well, if you're not as d——d a fool as Marshall you'll see that if he has struck a 'lead' or vein it's bound to run across our claims, and what's to keep us from 'sinking' for it as long as Marshall hasn't worked the other claims for years nor preëmpted them for this lead?"

"What'll keep him from preëmpting now?"

"Our possession."

"But if he can prove that the brothers left their claims to him to keep, he'll just send the Sheriff and his posse down upon us," persisted the first speaker.

"It will take him three months to do that by law, and the Sheriff and his posse can't do it before as long as we're in peaceable possession of it. And by the time the expert and Marshall return they'll find us in peaceful possession. Unless we have such blasted fools as to stay talking about it here."

"But what's to prevent Marshall from getting a gang of his own to drive us off?"

"Now you're talkin' and not yelpin'," said Steptoe, with slow insolence. "D——d if I don't begin to think you kalkilated I was goin' to employ you as lawyers! Nothing is to prevent him from gettin' up his gang, and we hope he'll do it, for you see it puts us both on the same level before the law, for we're both breakin' it. And we kalkilate that we're as good as any roughs they can pick up at Heavy Tree."

"Yes, Steptoe! We kin count us in!" said half a dozen voices, eagerly.

"But what's the job goin' to pay us?" persisted a Sydney man. "An' arter we've beat off this other gang are we going to scrub along on grub wages until we're yanked out by process servers three months later? If that's the ticket I'm not in!" said another. "Leastways I quarts mine!"

"We ain't going to do no more mining there than the bank," said Steptoe fiercely. "And the bank ain't going to wait no three months for the end of the lawsuit. They'll float the stock of that mine for a couple of millions, and get out of it with a million before a month. And they'll have to buy us off to do that. What they'll pay will depend upon the lead; but we don't move off those claims for less than $5,000, which will be $250 to each man. But," said Steptoe in a lower but perfectly distinct voice, "if there should be a row—and I they begin it—and in the scuffle Tom Marshall, their only witness, should happen to get in the way of a revolver or have his head caved in, there might be some difficulty in their holdin' any of the mine against honest, hard-working miners in possession. You hear me?"

There was a breathless silence for the moment, and a slight movement of the men in their chairs. But never in fear or protest. Every one had heard the speaker distinctly, and every man distinctly understood him. Some of them were criminals, one or two had already the stain of blood on their hands, but even the most timid, who at other times might have shrunk from suggested assassination, saw in the speaker's words only the fair removal of a natural enemy.

"All right, boys. I'm ready to wade in at once. Why ain't we on the road now? We might have been but for foolin' our time away on that man Van Loo."

"Van Loo!" repeated Hall, eagerly. "Van Loo! Was he here?"

"Yes," said Steptoe, shortly, administering a kick under the table to Hall, as he had no wish to revive the previous irritability of his comrades. "He's gone, but," turning to the others, "you'd have had to wait for Mr. Hall's arrival, anyhow. And now you've got your order you can start. Go in two parties by different roads and meet on the other side of the hotel at Hymettus. I'll be there before you. Pick up your shovels and drills as you go; remember, you're honest miners, but don't forget your shootin' irons for all that. Now scatter."

It was well that they did, vacating the room more cheerfully and sympathetically than they had entered it, or Hall's manifest disturbance over Van Loo's visit would have been noticed. When the last man had disappeared Hall turned quietly to Steptoe. "Well, what did he say? Where has he gone?"

"Don't know," said Steptoe with uneasy curtness. "He was running away with a woman—well, Mrs. Barker, if you want to know," he added with rising anger, "the wife of one of those cussed partners. Jack Hamlin was here, and was jockeying to stop him, and interfered. But what the devil has that job to do with our job?" He was losing his temper; everything seemed to turn upon this infernal Van Loo!

"He wasn't running away with Mrs. Barker," gasped Hall. "It was with her money! and the 'Pet of Petaluma' connected with the Wheat Trust swindle, which he organized, and with our money, which I lent him for the same purpose. And he knows all about that job, for I wanted to get him to go into it with us. Your name and mine ain't any too sweet smelling for the bank, and we ought to have a middleman who knows business and can talk smooth with them. The bank don't object to him, for they've employed him in even shadier transactions than this when they didn't wish to appear. I knew he was in difficulties along with Mrs. Barker's speculations, but I never thought him up to this. And," he added, with desperation, "you trusted him, too."

In an instant Steptoe caught the frightened man by the shoulders and was bearing him down on the table. "Are you a traitor, a liar, or a besotted fool?" he said, hoarsely. "Speak. When and where did I trust him?"

"You said in your note—I was—to—help him," gasped Hall.

"My note?" repeated Steptoe, releasing Hall, with astonished eyes.

"Yes," said Hall, tremblingly searching in his vest pocket. "I brought it with me. It isn't much of a note, but there's your signature, plain enough."

He handed Steptoe a torn piece of paper, folded in a three-cornered shape, Steptoe opened it. He instantly recognized the paper on which he had written his name and sent up to his wife at the Boomville hotel. But, added to it, in apparently the same hand, in smaller characters, were the words, "Help Van Loo all you can."

The blood rushed into his face. But he quickly collected himself and said hurriedly, "All right. I had forgotten it. Let the d—d sneak go. We've got what's a thousand times better to this claim at Marshall's, and it's well that he isn't in it to scoop the lion's share. Only we must not waste time getting there now. You go there first, and at once, and set those rascals to work. I'll follow you before Marshall comes up. Get; I'll settle up here."

His face darkened once more as Hall hurried away, leaving him alone. He drew out the piece of paper from his pocket and stared at it again. Yes; it was the one he had sent to his wife. How did Van Loo get hold of it? Was he at the hotel that night? Had he picked it up in the hall or passage when the servant dropped it? When Hall handed him the paper and he first recognized it a fiendish thought, followed by a spasm of more fiendish rage, had sent the blood to his face. But his crude common sense quickly dismissed that suggestion of his wife's complicity with Van Loo. But had she seen him passing through the hotel that night, and had sought to draw from him some knowledge of his early intercourse with the child, and confessed everything, and even produced the paper with his signature as a proof of identity? Women had been known to do such desperate things. Perhaps she disbelieved her son's aversion to her, and was trying to win Van Loo. Yet for the forged words by Van Loo, and the use he had put them to, he cared little. He believed the man was capable of forgery; indeed, he suddenly remembered that in the old days his son had spoken innocently, but admiringly, of Van Loo's wonderful chirographical powers and his faculty of imitating the writings of others, and how he had even offered to teach him. A new and exasperating thought came into his feverish consciousness. What if Van Loo, in teaching the boy, had even made use of him as an innocent accomplice to cover up his own tricks. The supposition was not to question, but his ethics to Steptoe, nor of his son's possible contamination, although since the night of the big strike he had held different views; it was simply a fierce, selfish jealousy that another might have profited by the lad's helplessness and inexperience. Hitherto he had tormented his jealousy before in his son's liking for Van Loo. He had at first encouraged his admiration and imitative regard for this smooth swindler's graces and accomplishments, which, though he scorned them himself, he was, after the common parental infatuation, willing that the boy should profit by. Unable, through his own consciousness, of distinguishing between Van Loo's superficial polish and the true breeding of a gentleman, he had only looked upon it as an equipment for his son which might be serviceable to himself. He had told his wife the truth when he informed her of Van Loo's failure to believe reminded of their former intimacy, but he had not told her how its discontinuance, after they had left Heavy Tree Hill, had affected her son, and how he still cherished his old admiration for that specious rascal. Nor had he told her how he had stung him, through his own selfish greed of the boy's affection. Yet now that it was possible that she had met Van Loo that evening, she might have become aware of Van Loo's power over her child. How she would exult, for all her pretended hatred of Van Loo! How, perhaps, they had plotted together! How Van Loo might have become aware of the place where his son was kept, and had been bribed by the mother to tell her! He stopped in a whirl of giddy fancies. His strong common sense, of all other things had been hitherto proof against such idle dreams or suggestions, but the very strength of his parental love and jealousy had weakened in him the terrors of imagination.

His first impulse had been to seek his wife, regardless of consequences, at Hymettus, where she had said she was going. It was on his way to the rendezvous at Marshall's claim. But this he as instantly set aside; it was his son he must find; she might not confess, or might deceive him; the boy would not, and, if his fears are correct, she could be arraigned afterward. It was possible for him to reach the little mission church and school, secluded in a remote valley by the old Franciscan fathers, where he had placed the boy for the last few years unknown to his wife. It would be a long ride, but he could still reach Heavy Tree Hill afterward before Marshall could be expert arrived. And he had a feeling he had never felt before on the eve of a desperate adventure—that he must see the boy first. He remembered how the child had often accompanied him in his flight, and how he had gained strength; and it seemed to him a kind of luck from the touch of that small hand in his. Surely it was necessary now that at least his mind should be at rest regarding him on the eve of an affair of this moment. Perhaps he might never see him again. At any other time, and under the influence of any other emotion, he would have scorned such a sentimentalism—he who had never troubled himself either with preparation for the future or consideration for the past. But at that moment he felt both. He drew a long breath. He could catch the next train to "The Three Boulders" and ride thence to San Felipe. He hurriedly left the room, settled with the landlord and galloped to the station. By the irony of circumstances, the only horse available was Mr. Hamlin's own.

To be continued.

A Japanese View of England.

From the London Times.

The *Yorodzu Choho*, a Japanese journal published in Tokio, devotes a portion of its columns to discussions in English; this part of the paper has an article entitled "England's Greatness," which is as follows: "Thy greatness, O England, is not thy own making. Thou hast not stored for thyself coals in Lancashire and iron in Yorkshire. Thy commodious harbors of Liverpool, Bristol, Southampton, &c., were not digged by thee. The warm wind that comes from the west and the fruitful rains which it brings are brought to thy shores by a power that is not thine own. Thou wast placed in the centre of the land hemisphere, and the whole world turns toward thee. Thou art the world's mart and thy wealth is the world's. Then thy laws, literature, and religion—they, too, are not all thy thinking. Where thy Hooker, Bacon, and Blackstone, had there not been Cæsar and Justinian for thee? What were thy Milton and Shakespeare, had there not been Æschylus, Horace, and Virgil, who unwittingly wrought for thee? What were thy Wyclif, Knox, and Wesley, had there not been Isaiah, Daniel, and Paul, who preached for thee? Rome, Greece, Judea, Phœnicia, all contributed their parts to make thee great. Thou art the product of ages of human labor, from Abraham and Homer downward. The world demands from thee a service which is thy due. Thy fleet ought to be employed not merely to protect thy interest, but to right the world's wrong. Thy pluck and skill ought to be freely given to help the helpless, to rescue the perishing."

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From the Academy.

Last Saturday evening the Electric avenue in Brixton was a pleasant sight. The sunshine poured down between the glazed roofs which cover the pavements; it reddened the red house walls that towered above the glass; and you were conscious of an ampler sky and a wider gaiety out there on the broad asphalt. The avenue was packed with shoppers, the shops gleamed and beckoned, money had been earned and was now being spent; it was all very human and happy. A bookshop was half hidden by its own tressels and outside shelves, piled as these were with books and periodicals. Hundreds of cheap cloth-bound books lay prone before me or rose in front of me, gilt lettered and decent to the eye, all priced 5½d. I edged my way into the fingering crowd, and took up a book here and there. The gloved hands of the daughters of Brixton travelled with mine along the shelves as I selected volumes for a momentary inspection. People nudged and hustled, others kept filing into the shop, and somewhere in the heat and crush coins were clinking almost continuously as they fell from the hand. Taking up Fenimore Cooper's "Pathfinder" I mused, "Can Cooper sell?" and a woman almost took it out of my hand and used it as a pointer as she ran her eyes along the shelves. Then she passed into the shop, clutching the "Pathfinder." "I picked up a novel—it was Dumas's "Louise de la Vallière," and followed her. To the youth I said:

"You seem to be doing rather well with these books; how many can you sell here in a week?"

"About four thousand, sir."

"No, no; in a week?"

"Yes, sir, four thousand."

"I will see the proprietor," I said, and I did.

"Is it true that you are selling four thousand 5½d. novels a week in this shop?"

"That is about the figure. We shall sell eight or nine hundred to-day alone."

"How many different novels are you supplying at this price?"

"About two hundred and sixty, and fresh ones are, of course, being added to the series."

"Tell me, will you, where these novels come from, and how is it possible to sell them in cloth covers at 5½d.?"

"Well, they are turned out by a publisher in the East End who has for a long time been supplying drapers with cheap books to sell at 9½d. a volume. This 5½d. line is a new thing. I was only offered it six weeks ago, and I have already sold, or ordered, about 17,000 copies. Of course the books are printed from stereos bought up from publishers. As for the binding, it is certainly wonderful, and would be impossible but for a new machine which is capable of binding 1,200 volumes in an hour. I may tell you that 30,000 of these novels are turned out weekly."

"But, as a bookseller and a bookman, you will admit that the type and paper leave a great deal to be desired."

"That is so. Still they are not so bad, and the moral of the thing is that people want inexpensive books and, if supplied with them, will buy them in amazing quantities."

"Your customers prefer a 5½d. cloth-bound book printed from stereos to a 4½d. paper-covered book turned out in first-rate style?"

"Yes; you see a cloth-bound book looks better on shelf and table. They think it well worth the extra penny. Understand me; I am with you in deploring the small print and indifferent paper. But here the books are. They are all popular; and they go like water."

"You say they are all popular. But do you mean to say that Jane Austen is popular? I see you have three of her novels."

"She sells well."

"And is the 'Book of Snobs' popular?"

"Well, we sell that because we sell Thackeray's other books."

"What kind of books are 'Beulah,' by Evans Wilson, and 'The Mills of the Gods,' by Mrs. Twells, and 'Barbara's Warning,' by Mrs. Houston, and 'The Vale of Cedars,' by Grace Aguilar?"

"Oh, they are rather goody-goody; but they are excellent stories, and sell all right."

"Along with 'The Heart of Midlothian' and 'Pelham,' and 'Barry Lyndon' and 'Wuthering Heights,' and 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' and Burns's and Byron's poems, and Shakespeare?"

"Yes, they sell well."

"But Shakespeare at 5½d. is execrable."

"Yes, but the 5½d. edition sells better editions—Bliss's new two and eightpenny edition, for instance."

"Do you sell many six-shilling novels?"

"Not many. But I can safely give a first order for fifty copies of every new story by Marie Corelli, and the works of Crockett, Barrie, Ian Maclaren, and Hall Caine go well as presents."

"As presents?"

"Yes, they seem to be bought as presents."

"And your belief is that for their own reading people want cheaper books?"

"I am sure of it; and cheaper books would pay publishers and authors much better. The demand for cheap novels, of which the copyright has expired, is extraordinary; and why should not new books command a vastly larger public? I would like to see ordinary six-shilling novels, of the following week this wealthy citizen had been retailed from headquarters for 1d., and 1d. put on the next Saturday night. Doc was at his pen and as the lone horseman came down the road the highwayman stepped out from the shadows of a jack oak and covered his man.

That night the gang drank up the best part of the $28.50 and voted Doc "a dead game toucher."

The verdancy of the gang he had to deal with made Doc's work comparatively easy. He invariably drank gin and water, and by a simple trick that a child ought to have detected—the trick of drinking the water and leaving the gin—he was always sober.

When the proceeds of Doc's raid had been expended, together with the $7 received for the jack, which, the gang determined to rob a hardware store. The job had been undertaken once, but had failed. The time, at Doc's suggestion, was fixed upon election night. A great many farmers, he said, would be in to vote and trade, and the people being either drunk or tired, would sleep soundly when once asleep, and the gang voted that Doc was a great thinker.

The time arrived, the store was entered, and when they were all in Doc ducked down behind the counter and reached the rear end of the store. Now a big bullseye was turned upon the gang, who arose from their work to look down the dark barrels of a half dozen shotguns. One of the gang, seeing Doc with the Sheriff's party, made a play for his pistol, but the Sheriff shoved his shotgun yet nearer the robber's face and said, softly: "Be quiet," and he was calm.

The next day three of the gang, who was himself a hard man, made an attempt to kill the detective, and, having done his work, Doc departed. Friends of the accused hired a lawyer, who made a beautiful picture of these innocent lads who had lived all their lives in the quiet country town, and who had never been guilty of a wrong until they were encouraged and trapped into it by the wicked young detective.

Alas for the criminals; one of the gang gave up to the Sheriff, and by the finding of stolen goods and the property of a man who had been murdered, they were all, save the one who had weakened, sent to Joliet, where they are still receiving their mail.

Young Pippin's success in this now celebrated case won for him the full confidence of the agency, and before he had reached Chicago other important work was mapped out for him, but to the surprise of the agency he refused to accept another assignment.

"I could not bear," he said to me, "the thought of living a whole life that was a lie—to appear always to be that which I was not—to mix and mingle constantly with the wicked of this world, in which there should be so much happiness.

"It is a great and important work which ought to be done, but it is not for me."

Returning to the West again, Pippin entered the service of Uncle Sam as a postal clerk.

Finding a letter in the mail marked to me, he wrote on the back of the envelope: "Hello—Doc.—R. M. S.!" and I knew then that he was in the railway mail service.

It was some time after the receipt of this brief message that the meeting in the sleeping car, already referred to, occurred, and it was during his many visits to me at Denver that he related the detective story herein retold.

"How is it," I asked one day," that you are assistant superintendent of the mail service in the West, when you are under 30 and new, comparatively new, at the business?"

"Hard luck," said Doc, smiling sadly, coughing, and thumping his chest.

Then it was that he began to tell me some of his experiences in the postal car, but he did not tell all. He was as modest as he was honest, and would not tell to me, his friend, the real tales of heroism in which he was himself the hero. He told enough, however, to interest me and cause me to find out more from a mutual friend and to verify the information by some of the records and correspondence which I was afterward permitted to see. I found that his loyalty, bravery, and devotion to duty had been warmly commended in autograph letters from the highest officials of the service.

It was, indeed, hard luck that brought him promotion and an easy place, which he could not have gained save through the kindness of higher officials. He had been in any number of wrecks, for many of the Western roads were new at that time, and railroading was not safe as it is now. Once there was a head-end collision, in which the wreck took fire. Doc was dreadfully bruised, but he had all his limbs, and as the flames crept closer and closer to his car he busied himself carrying the mail matter to a place of safety. When his work had been completed and the flames lit up the cañon they showed Doc lying upon his mail bags, apparently dead. The trainmen found him and soon restored him to consciousness, for he had only fainted from overwork and the pain of his many wounds.

It was nearly a year before he was able to take his run again, and this time his route lay over the Santa Fé system.

One night, when the train came roaring down the cañon, the engine jumped the track, the mail car went to pieces against the locomotive, the coaches piled upon the pieces, and the wreck began to burn.

When the trainmen and passengers came forward to look for "the fellows up ahead" they saw large and small envelopes sailing out of the burning débris, and they knew at once that the mail agent must be fast in the wreck. The whistle valve had been forced open, and now the wild, ceaseless cry of the wounded engine drowned all other sounds, and made it impossible for the men to hear the cries of the imprisoned postal clerk. All this he knew, and while the hungry flames were eating their way to where he lay he pulled the register bag to him, and began to shy the valuable mail out into the sage brush.

When the steam was exhausted and the cry of the engine had hushed there came no sound from the engineman, for their voices were hushed in death. Above the sound of the crackling flames they could hear Doc calling to them from his place below the wreck, and the train crew worked desperately right in the very face of the fire to rescue the unfortunate.

Gradually the voice of the prisoner grew fainter and fainter, and before the rescuers reached him it hushed entirely.

At last, just as they were about to give him up, as he was now apparently dead, they succeeded in dragging Doc from the wreck, and to the joy of all he soon revived. He was yet alive, but had breathed so much of the flames that his left lung was almost ruined, and he was never able to resume his place on the road.

It was this unfortunate wreck and the story of his heroism that gave him the important place of assistant superintendent of the Western division of the United States mail service when he was not yet 30 years old. It was the burn in his breast that made him cough and beat his left lung, that pinched his face and made his eyes look larger than they were. He went on silently—almost cheerfully—doing what he could, but we who watched knew that the hidden scar he had there was wearing his life away.

Not long ago I returned to Denver, and meeting the chief clerk in the street asked him about Doc. I had been wandering over the face of the earth for nearly two years and was behind the times, and now as my friend looked at me his face took on a sadder shade and he answered slowly: "Doc died six months ago."

CY WARMAN.

THIS UMPIRE TURNED.

He Poured Lead Into the Nine That Made a Row Over His Decision.

From the New Orleans Times-Democrat.

At 5:15 o'clock yesterday evening a fight occurred over a game of baseball at the corner of Amelia and South Rampart streets, during which several negroes were shot and several beaten and cut. The firing of the shots created intense excitement in the neighborhood, and for a while the police had their hands full.

Notwithstanding the number of shots fired, only one negro was seriously wounded. His name is Waller Williams, alias Fish. He received a bullet wound under the right shoulder blade. When he was examined by the house surgeon at the hospital the opinion was expressed that it was a serious wound. Henry Blackwell received a bullet wound in the thigh. He was also taken to the hospital, where his wound was dressed. It was not a serious wound. He was taken to his home on Toledano street. Blackwell is but 10 years old. He was a spectator. Henry, who was one of the baseball nine, was cut several times on the right hand and left shoulder. After his wounds were dressed he went to his home, where he was arrested.

The fight was over the stake money. One nine was from the front of the district and the other from the rear. Dan Watson was the umpire, and when he decided who had won the stake money the row began. There were words, then blows, and then the shooting. Henry Jackson wielded a baseball bat, and when it struck Albert Baptiste the latter cut him. Then Albert Butler drew his pistol and fired three shots, and one of these balls wounded Walter Williams, a shining light in the back-of-town nine. The umpire snatched the pistol from Butler, and turning on him and his crowd stampeded them, following them up, shooting at them as they ran. It was one of these shots that wounded Blackwell. The umpire was assisted by Willie Jones, who also had a pistol and fired five shots at the flying nine. He was arrested and charged with shooting and wounding. Watson, the umpire, was captured at the corner of Amelia and Tchoupitoulas streets and locked up on a similar charge. Thomas Johnson, George Pollard, Leon Pollard, and Esthes Lewis, who all carried marks of having been in the war, were charged with disturbing the peace.

SNEEZES INTERRUPTED COURT.

Everybody Was at It and There Was no One to Say Gesundheit.

From the St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

The case of John H. Vette against John C. Obert was on trial in Judge Haughton's court yesterday. During the process of the suit the lawyers had a tilt over the admission of certain evidence, and the following dialogue ensued:

"Your Honor, the assertion that was just made by the—ec-cachoo—on my—ec-cachoo—is absolutely—ec-cachoo!"

"Your Honor, I—ec-cachoo—sir, to the statement made by my ec-cachoo!"

Judge Haughton admitted the testimony and the witness proceeded.

"Well, it was just this—ec-cachoo—I said to Mr. ec-cachoo-cachoo—and he said to me—ec-cachoo-cachoo-cachoo!"

At this point nearly every one in court was sneezing. Lawyers, clients, jurors, and witnesses joined in a sneezing chorus in which sneezes of various quality and a wide range of tone and discord were mingled. The pompous, ponderous sneeze of Constable Hand was a most effective