WATCHING BIG MEN PLAY THE RUBBER IN GAME OF LIFE

Have you won the rubber in the game of life as you are playing it?

If you have you may remember what a job it was. If you haven't, if the cards in your game have run badly and the trumps have been few, you know how disagreeable it is to feel uncertain whether victory or failure is to come at last.

The world finds much of its amusement watching big men play the rubber. History amounts to little else than more or less accurate accounts of the way they have won or lost, the stories of some of the losers, like Napoleon, for instance, taking more pages in the telling than the stories of some who win. Much of the news of the day—which is current history—is about the latest plays made by men who still have the rubber to win.

Ever think of it that way? Look over the columns of this morning's paper and see if it isn't so. Roosevelt is playing one of the biggest games in the world, and that gives news value to the most trivial things he or any one connected with him does. Roosevelt is hardly playing his rubber as yet, however; he is still young enough to lose his present contest and yet win finally in his life game. Grover Cleveland, who quit the presidency not exactly a winner, has since won respect and regard from more people than have come to almost any man after leaping the presidency in recent national history. Dewey won his rubber when he sailed into Manila bay.

How great captains of finance and industry have won the deciding games of their lives would fill a book. The career of Henry Villard, who completed the Northern Pacific, whose real deciding game was played after middle life and who was once so badly defeated just before he was fifty that he was thought down and out permanently, would make a thrilling chapter. The great game between James J. Hill and E. H. Harriman, not yet finally played out perhaps, would make another.

Lawson hasn't won his rubber yet apparently, though F. Augustus Heinze, his opponent for years, seemed recently to have done so by making peace with H. H. Rogers, who won his so overwhelmingly, years ago, by playing partners with John D. Rockefeller, that to-day it isn't thought he could possibly lose the advantage he has gained. The struggle of Stuyvesant Fish with the insurance problem is practically in the nature of a game for the rubber.

The struggle of no other man in the world to win the rubber in the game of life is attracting so much attention today as that which is being carried on by Sergius Witte, the Dutch-Russian railroad man, Government official and peace commissioner, whom the Czar made a Count as well as Premier to reward him for concluding the Portsmouth treaty with Japan, yet whose game is opposed at every point by some of the ablest and most of the high-born people in all Russia. No man in the world is playing for higher stakes than Witte.

It is the belief of a good part of the world that in wininng the rubber Count Witte would also win new privileges and noteworthy advancement for the whole of Russia; it may or may not turn out that way. Undoubtedly the Count would like to see all his fellow-Russians as comfortable and happy as possible, but some of those who have studied his course carefully do not think it harsh to say that he cares more for final personal success and the preservation of the autocracy than for anything else, nor do they forget that before the war with Japan he was often ranged upon the side of retrogression.

If Witte does win the rubber it will be a great victory for socialism of the sort Bismarck believed in. Among other things, Witte agrees with Bismarck that the State should own all the public utilities, like railroads, telegraphs, etc., and it was Witte who created the Russian Government monopolies of the trade in alcoholic drinks and tobacco. Should he win the rubber this time he may renew the proposition he put forward some years ago to establish the price of wheat by international treaty.

Robert E. Peary, now in the far north on his seventh polar expedition, is playing his rubber for stakes of an entirely different nature.

No one has so persistently sought the secrets of the north as Peary, but the list of men who have staked their all on the Arctic game is long and the history of their futile efforts is pathetic.

It is rather a curious thing that while several of the pole-seekers have taken men of some experience of the Arctic ice, the Arctic water and the Arctic weather with them, almost every one of the explorers themselves has been a man who knew nothing at all about the north prior to his first "dash for the pole."

Peary, though positively green in Arctic matters when he began to tackle the north's icy fastnesses, is now a man of greater Arctic experience than any other Arctic explorer who ever lived. His first reconnoissance of Greenland's icy cap was undertaken twenty years ago, and he has devoted much of his time and practically all of his initiative to the north ever since. In one sense, too, he has played a winning game, having made himself a figure of world interest, which he could not have done as a civil engineer in the United States navy.

In 1902, when he returned from his four years' voyage, he announced that he would make no further attempts to conquer the pole, but the fascination of the game has proved too strong for him. Possibly he is now fated to lose his life in playing it, as so many have before him, though his friends believe he will win. Peary rounded the Greenland archipelago, proving Greenland to be an island, and gave the name of Cape Morris K. Jesup to the most northerly known bit of land in the world, on his last voyage, but he will have to do better than that to win the prize he has been striving for so long.

The only great game of exploration left in all the world is to be found in the two polar zones, but in the years it was being played Henry M. Stanley's bulked larger in the eye of the world than the game of any one playing for lesser stakes than dominion over a section of the earth and power over millions of human beings. Stanley's game finally approached these things, but he began to play it, as ordered, as a newspaper reporter in 1869.

Stanley's life was one of the most romantic ever lived by mortal man. His origin was obscure. When fifteen he shipped as a cabin boy on a schooner bound for New Orleans. When the civil war broke out this piece of human flotsam was just about twenty-one. He enlisted promptly, on the Confederate side, of course, served till captured by the Federals, and then, not being very particular whose game it was, so long as he was playing, enlisted in the Union navy, in which he rose to be acting ensign on the ironclad Ticonderoga.

After the war's close he became a newspaper correspondent and went to Asia Minor. Bennett liked his work in Asia Minor, and sent him to Africa to report the expedition led by Lord Napier against Theodore, King of Abyssinia. Stanley did so well at this job that Bennett decided he was the man to be intrusted with the difficult mission he had in mind of finding the missionary Dr. David Livingstone, who had then been "lost" for years in mid-Africa.

That was in 1871, and though the elder Bennett did not die till the following year, it was the younger who commissioned Stanley from Paris.

Livingstone died in Africa without discovering the source of the White Nile; Stanley finished that part of Livingstone's work. He was the roughest of rough diamonds when he started after Livingstone, but picked up wonderfully in the matter of polish after Livingstone had been found, and a dozen years before his death, two years ago, married Dorothy Tennant, then the most popular and one of the most beautiful young women in London society.

He was also elected to the House of Commons after a lively contest, but the real deciding game of his life was played in darkest Africa.

Africa has been the stage upon which many men besides Stanley and Livingstone have played the most important parts of their life games. Chinese Gordon played there and lost; so did Emin Pasha, both being killed by natives who objected to being civilized. It was in Africa that Cecil Rhodes, whose patronymic has been perpetuated by the application of the name Rhodesia to a great section of the British South African possessions, played his great game, winning for the most part, though not unqualifiedly.

It was in Africa, and largely through Rhodes that the Boers lost the rubber in their game for a national life of their own, as Kitchener won his in defeating them after others had failed. Whatever defeats Kitchener might suffer now, his victories in South Africa made his place in the annals of his country secure; had he failed, the fame his earlier achievements gave him would have been sadly dimmed.

Many of the world's most famous poets, novelists, sculptors and painters have had to struggle desperately in the game of life before winning assured position, and in some cases their struggles have been so long and so desperate as to make them lose well-nigh all hope before the final winning. To not a few this did not come till after death.

The story of Jean Francois Millet, the French peasant, who struggled with poverty all his life, but whose little canvas "The Angelus" sold for more money a few years after his death than he had been able to earn in all his years of life, is an extreme example of deferred recognition, the like of which could hardly come true in the case of any one save a painter or sculptor.

"Jane Eyre" was the card which enabled Charlotte Bronte to win her place as a writer, and it was not recognized as a trump by any of the first dozen pubilshers to whom it was offered. Conan Doyle, whose Sherlock Holmes stories alone have made him a comfortable fortune, had a hard time winning the rubber, but finally did it with "The White Company." When James Lane Allen, the novelist, was playing his game for the rubber in New York he was so straitened financially that he told a friend he had either to win or starve, adding that just them he was "mostly starving." Edward Noyes Westcott, the author of "David Harum," couldn't get any one to buy the manuscript for a long time; finally it was published with overwhelming success, but not till after the author's death from consumption.

Samuel M. Clemens had a frightful time getting any one to publish his "Innocents Abroad," vainly offering the manuscript to practically all the reputable New York publishers in turn and at last accepting the offer of a subscription book company, made by the manager in the face of the adverse opinion of the majority of the directors. This book paid him $100,000 net; at thirty-six he thought he had won the rubber, in 1869, when the royalties began to come in. All the world agreed with him then and for years afterward, but he hadn't.

"Mark Twain" had to begin to play his real rubber at about fifty, in the early nineties, when his publishing house of Charles L. Webster & Co. went down. Till then he had experienced all sorts of luck except bad luck for many years; though not a millionaire he was surely good for half a million, and was preparing to settle down in London and "have a good time" for the rest of his life.

He had supposed himself a sound business man in the years the publishing house had been running, and it is still believed that had his directions been followed strictly in its conduct failure could never have come to it. Be that as it may, he found one day that his only chance to rehabilitate his fortunes was to write enough stable Mark Twain copy and deliver enough Mark Twain lectures to pay his debts.

He had little trouble in gettting a contract to do a lot of magazine contributions at $1000 a "contrib," and later other good contracts came his way; so many of them, in fact, that with health and strength the payment o. his debts would not have been a very tedious matter. Ill health came soon, however, and made the years immediately following years of genuine ordeal, years for which the world of readers may properly be thankful, however, for they gave "Pudd'nhead Wilson," "Tom Sawyer Abroad," "Joan of Arc" and several other pieces of Twain's best work to the world.

Anyway the task has been accomplished; it is years now since Mark Twain was known by the world to have won the rubber by paying everything he owed, and the fact that he had H. H. Rogers for a helpful friend has never been laid up against him even by the rabidest haters of the Standard Oil.

Not many think of Clemens nowadays as the man who, more than any one else, helped General Grant to win his final rubber in the game of life after the disasters which followed the rise of the Appomatox hero's name in furthering the get-rich-quick schemes devised by Ferdinand Ward. Yet it was the firm of Charles L. Webster & Co. that published Grant's book and paid to Grant's widow more than $400,000 in royalties.

It may be worth noting that no famous writer in the game of life has ever been dismayed by a run of hard luck.

THE SAGEBRUSH PARSON

Continued From Page Three.

the Eureka printing office and had a number of cards struck off. He sent some to Katherine, who mailed them without delay, many of them accompanied by a personal note. Others he mailed himself, or left in the stores and saloons, or handed to his friends and acquaintances. The town suddenly seemed to be full of the Reverend Clement Vaughan, F. R. H. S., F. R. A. S., F. R. M. S., F. G. S., M. V. I."

Such zeal could not in the nature of things go unrewarded. Within a short time it bore fruit in strange and unexpected ways.

CHAPTER XVI.

"The Rabbit Hit."

The S. L. C., that is to say, the Sazeras Lying Club, like the D. P. I., held a special meeting to consider the Reverend Clement Vaughan. As Barker had foreseen, this was sure to happen, sooner or later.

Not as keen on the scent of the objects of their satire as the indefatigable secretary of the D. P. I., and with reason, for a man is always more ready to confess himself a liar than a fool, its officers nevertheless kept a sharp lookout, and the new lecturer's cardful of titles did not escape them.

Poole, who was chairman of the advisory board, formally presented the name of the young Methodist as candidate for the next leather medal, given to the Champion Liar by the club. The last to be honored in this manner had been a young man by the name of Freyne, who had claimed to be the son of an Irish baron.

The S. L. C. had looked him up before ordering the medal. Some of the members were in favor of giving Vaughan likewise "the benefit of the doubt." But Poole was hot against him. "He ought to be hauled in before he goes any farther," was Poole's verdict. "Look at the way he's carrying sail! Lectured at Palisade last night; tonight he's going to be in Winnamucca."

"He's quite a High Tippy Bob Royal, I tell you," said Shed Wellman. Shed had been admitted to the society on the strength of his cattle yarns. Poole was what was known as a "tall" liar. Barker was the best "all-'round liar" in the club, but there were others who merited distinction. Their prominence varied according to their ability. Only the best liars told where the medal should go, on the principle "Set a thief to catch a thief."

"My wife says," continued Shed, who was continually quoting this authority, "that there ain't been such a public speaker in these parts since she can remember, and she don't know as ever."

"She's been waught by his titles," replied Poole.

Barker was for writing to the various Royal Societies, requesting information regarding "the said Clement Vaughan." Barker's ventures in foreign correspondence had always brought him large returns. He would like to confront Vaughan with testimony thus obtained. "I'd like to see what he'd do," said Barker.

Ned Wilkins, arriving opportunely, moved that Barker be empowered to write such letters. The motion was carried. But Poole was for immediate action. "He's played us for a lot of suckers," repeated Poole. "To be played for a sucker was what no man in Eureka would endure, least of all Poole. He was extremely sensitive when his intelligence was impugned.

"It don't stand to reason that a feller twenty-three-four years old can be a member of so many big societies," said Poole. "He's lied; he's lied big; the biggest that ever was. If we don't do as we've set out we might as welldisband."

Still, the meeting continued irresolute. The question of the medal would doubtless have been laid on the table had not Winslow, at that moment, happened in. He had, of course, heard of the lecturer's success and of Mrs. Chisholm's share in it, and he smiled when he heard of the club's project.

"But now," said Poole, "these fellers want to let the thing lie over till Barker's written to England and got an answer back."

"Quite right," returned Winslow. "It would be a pity to disturb the man now. By the time Barker has received an answer to his letters the lecture season will be over."

Poole uttered an impatient ejaculation. "That's just the way this club always acts," he said discontentedly. "Wait till a thing is cold, and ten what good is it?"

He gave Pilcher a kick under the table. This meant, "Say something, won't you? Why do you make me do all the talking?"

"A thing like this wants to be done right off," said Pilcher tamely.

A crowd of young men came noisily in, demanding "what was up?" To these the project appealed with peculiar force. They rallied to Poole's support and voted, with speed and zeal, to "put it through." They voted "that a medal of significant design and properly inscribed should be presented to the Rev. Clement Vaughan." Considerable argument ensued as to what was a significant design and how the inscription should read, but these matters were referred to a committee consisting of Barker, Poole and a man named Jones.

Where was Barker, anyway? Gone home to write his letters, some one answered.

"Let him go," said Poole. "I move that Shed presents the medal."

"Say, look-a-here, I kick!" exclaimed Shed. "The Parson's a friend of mine. My family go to his church. I won't mix up in any such business!"

Poole was proposed as a substitute.

"He'll rub it in," mused Shed. "I'd let the Parson down easy."

Aloud he added, "Well, I'll do it, provided that you put me on the other committee. I want to see your blamed old medal before I deliver it."

The proposition was accepted. Every one was tired of the discussion and impatient for the informal hour which followed the routine business, the hour when all the members smoked while one told a story. He it was who "set up the drinks," thereby insuring the appreciative atmosphere so necessary to the raconteur.

It was Shed Wellman's turn that night. When the rest of the company were established, with their glasses and their pipes, he began, a little hurriedly for a man at ease with himself and them.

"Boys, I'm goin' to tell you a true story, and I'll bet you'll say when I get through it's as good as a lie."

"Don't you fool yourself!"

"Not by a damn sight!"

"O-oh!"

"Wait till I get through before you holler," Shed went on. "You'll think it's a lie anyway."

This sounded more promising. A purr of approbation ran through the company. "Git at it!" they cried.

"You know Dick," pursued the story-teller.

"Cussin' Dick?" they queried.

"Yes. The story's about him."

"He's the feler that got doped," said one.

"No, married," said another.

"They're both the same thing," said a third.

"Go on, Shed," called the rest.

"He's been actin' as foreman on my ranch, as some of you know.—You keep still till I get through!—And ever since he come there my wife wouldn't go near the ranch for fear she'd overhear some of his remarks. Best man I ever see to ride, round up or throw a rope! Did it all with cuss words. If any of you ever see him——" Shed paused.

"We've seen him," said one.

"Heard him," corrected another.

"Well, after he got through marryin' and unmarryin', he got religion."

"Dick! Religion?" shouted half a dozen.

"I'm givin' it to you straight," Shed declared. "You go over to the Methodist church Sundays, you'll see him regular as the day comes 'round. Well, last week I was ridin' along, and off in the middle of a pasture I see Dick sittin' his bronc, sayin' nothin'. Once in a while he'd give the critter a clip or a dig with a spur, and up would go the bronc's heels. That's as far as they'd got.

"'Hullo, Dick,' says I, 'What's the trouble?' He kinder laughed the way he does, a-humpin' his shoulders. 'Parson's cut off my swear!' says he, 'an' I ain't worth a—h—m—to make this h—m h—m go!' says he. 'We've got to get acquainted all over,' says he. 'The bronc thinks I don't mean a h—m word I say.' Well, sir, that afternoon he went in to see the parson and back he come!

"'You parallelipipedon!' he yells. 'You isosceles triangle!' and that bronc lit out like the devil was after him! 'What's that mean, Dick?' says I. 'Do you know?' 'Keep still,' says he. 'I don't know, but neither does the bronc. He thinks I'm cussin'. Parson got the words out of the dictionary.' There was a lot more, but I can't remember 'em all. Hy-potty-noose was one of 'em!'

The story-teller paused for recognition. Ned Wilkins laughed appreciatively. Those who had confidence in Ned's ability to see the point laughed with him.

Winslow smiled indulgently. Those to whom he was an oracle measured their response by his.

"I don't suppose it makes any difference what words you use if your intentions are good," said Barker, who had posted his letters and returned.

This led to a discussion as to what expletives were inevitably "cuss words," what were the several grades and degrees of blasphemous expression, when swearing was commendable, when superfluous, what it implied on the part of the swearer, wherein and how far it should be resented by the one sworn at. Afterwards they disbanded, promising to meet at Poole and Pilcher's the next day, and select a design for the medal.

It was grotesque enough to satisfy the most exacting, big as a soup plate, and inscribed:

"To the Rev. Clement Vaughan, F. R. H. S., F. R. A. S., F. R. M. S., F. G. S., M. V. I., champion liar.

"From the Sazerac Lying Club."

Poole and Jones laughed themselves sick over it. Shed looked glum. "It's the sort of thing that's dreadful funny on the other feller," he said, as he shouldered the box and started for the parson's study.

There was no one there. The door stood ajar, as if to let in some of the faint autumnal sunshine, in lieu of other heat. Vaughan was saving his fuel lfor the extreme weather promised later. For the Sunday services and the mid-week meeting he kindled a fire in one of the big black stoves near the door. But the corner where it stood was discouragingly remote. The study partook but little of its beneficent glow; the bedroom, still farther away, was beyond hope. From the Paiutis who had encamped on the hill behind the church he obtained a pair of heavy blankets for his bed and did not suffer at night. During the day, when he studied and wrote, he broke away from his desk every now and then, to walk up and down and swing his arms.

Shed slowly whirled himself around in the office chair and made inward comments:

"Colder'n charity!"

"Darker'n the grave!"

"Not a damn picture in the place!"

Shed's big, handsome house was full of pictures, warm as summer, and there were plants in the windows and a canary.

"It beats Hanah Cook!"

This was the final word with Shed. When a thing beat Hannah Cook there was no more to be said.

"By gum, I'll take the darned thing back," he said to himself, "and tell the boys I won't do it. But Poole would jump at the chance, and I believe Winslow would. Hulla, there he comes!"

Vaughan entered eagerly. He was full of confidence, these days. Wherever he had lectured people had been kind to him. The attendance had been good at the church services and there had been sociables, not yielding concessions to those who desired to drink and dance, but offering attractions of their own. Jack had made lemonade, without a "stick," a barrelful each time, ad had offered it as his donation; and there had been songs and games.

Every day the young preacher felt that he drew nearer to his followers and that they drew nearer to him. He did not know it was cold and dark in the study. Nor did he hold the absence of ornament a lack, as did his visitor. The austerity of his surroundings, if he had considered it, would have struck him as much more desirable than the equipment of the ranchman's gaudy home on Richmond Hill. It was with no discrimination against his own poverty in comparison with the other's wealth, but quite the reverse that he welcomed the cattle magnate. He inquired for Mrs. Wellman and for Tom and the little Maud, talked of church matters, of the affairs of the town and looked at the box.

"Some of the boys of the S. L. C.," Shed began, nervously untying his bundle, "thought 'twould be a good joke to send you this—on—on account of your titles, you know. They thought you were tryin' to fool 'em. They took it as a kind of a stump."

Shed perspired freely and grew very red. With the most incongruous solemnity he handed over the medal. With corresponding gravity Vaughan received it. There was an ominous pause.

Finally Vaughan laid the thing on his desk.

"You know it's considered a great compliment 'round here to be called a good liar." Shed tried to speak lightly.

"Indeed?" returned the parson, with a lift of the eyebrow. "They'd better make sure first that I'd lied. Why didn't they write to England and ascertain whether I had a right to these—titles?"

"They have. At least Barker was going to," Shed made haste to rejoin. "But they couldn't wait."

"I see," said Vaughan, again taking up the medal and putting it back into the box. "I'll defer my acknowledgments until they've heard."

"And so I come away feeling like a blam-jam idiot!" Shed declared to Pilcher, who mhe found alone in the store a few minutes later. "Where's Poole?"

"Gone out."

"Well, you tell him when he comes in, with my compliments, that he's made an ass of himself," a message promptly delivered by Pilcher.

"Oh, he did say I was an ass, did he!" rejoined Poole.

"Now, don't get mad," said Pilcher.

"I am mad," said Poole, and he grew madder, not with Shed, singularly enough, but with the parson.

"I've wanted to smash his face ever since he come to Eureka," he confessed to Pilcher; and Pilcher looked, as he felt, sympathetic. He, too, was unprepared, by temperament and education, to resist an impulse of this kind.

When Vaughan passed the store on his way to the postoffice, as was his custom, late that afternoon, Pilcher was on the steps and accosted him. "Why don't you call in, some time when you're goin' by?" he inquired affably.

"I will," replied Vaughan, who always met friendly advances at least halfway.

"You might stop when you come back," suggested Pilcher.

"If it's not too late I will," promised Vaughan. When he returned he found Pilcher still on the steps, and together they entered the store.

Poole was leaning over the counter. "Been takin' a little exercise, Pilcher and me," he vouchsafed. "This sort o' weather you wanter keep your blood circulatin'."

"Very true," agreed the visitor. "What were you doing? I'd like some exercise myself."

"Sparring," replied Poole nonchalantly. "Ever had on the gloves?" He led the way to the inner room. It was larger than the store and empty, save for some rough settees pushed back against the board walls. There were two windows in the rear, but they gave very little light. Another building, a storehouse, had been erected within three feet of Poole and Pilcher's since their occupancy of the place. Already, in the early October dusk, the room required the light of two great kerosene lamps set into brackets on the wall.

He closed the glass door and the transom-window beside it. Two pairs of boxing gloves lay on one of the settees. Poole picked them up and handed one pair to Vaughan, who fingered them irresolutely.

"I suppose my people would object," he said, hesitating; but he slipped on first one glove, and then other. Poole was already equipped. He tapped the parson on the chest. Involuntarily Vaughan responded.

Pilcher drew aside. Outside, in the store, a boy, who had come on an errand, caught sight of the two shadows bobbing up and down on the transom and cautiously reopened it. Another boy joined him, then a man. Although facing them, Vaughan did not see them; he saw only his antagonist.

More and more active grew Poole, more and more severe his blows, following one another in rapid succession. They descended with malicious force on the head and shoulders of the young Methodist.

He was driven into one corner and then the other, pounded to and fro. He leaped wildly about, conscious, now, of the lookers-on and of the ludicrous spectacle he afforded them. The boys hanging over the transom howled with delight. The man who had joined them guffawed. Other men rushed in. They climbed on chairs, elbowing one another. The transom was filled with their gaping, grinning faces. They shouted approval, encouragement, derision. Vaughan's heart swelled. Anger rose like steam in him. With it returned the memory of Frank Henley's instructions. Up went his gloved hands, pawing the air. Poole backed and parried and backed again, until he reached the glass door. On came the Methodist, like a whirlwind, his eyes blazing, his lips tense. All at once his fist shot out, catching Poole under the chin. Heels over head went the storekeeper, crashing through the window in the door.

Shouts of appreciation issued from the group of men and boys in the store. They jumped down from the transom and surrounded the prostrate Poole. "Good one!" they cried. "Hi, yi, yi!"

Vaughan pulled off his gloves and assisted his adversary to his feet. The blood was streaming down Poole's face where he had been cut by the broken glass. "Bring a basin of water and a clean cloth," Vaughan directed. "There's one cut which will need a few stitches," he said to Poole; "I'll sew it up, unless you'd rather send for Addison."

"Addison's full," reported one of the bystanders.

Poole winked away the blood which trickled into his eye. Pilcher by this time had brought the water. Vaughan gently sponged the hurt. "Yes, it will take three or four stitches," he said after examining the wound.

"Go ahead," said Poole, grimly.

Vaughan took from his pocket a small surgeon's case and immediately went to work. The crowd looked on, well pleased.

"He's sure markin' ye, Poole," said one.

"The Reverend Clement Vaughan," said another.

"F. R. H. S., F. R. A. S.," supplemented a third.

"F. S. P.—Feller what Smashed Poole."

Poole did not flinch under the needle or the wit. The surgeon continued, sewed up the cut, applied strips of plaster and stood back to admire his work.

"I don't believe Addison himself could have done any better than that!" he said complacently.

"The show's over," concluded the bystanders and moved away.

"What's the tax, parson?" inquired Poole faintly.

Vaughan slipped the case back into his pocket before answering. "I owed you that," he said briefly, "for putting you through the door."

"Owed me nothing!" exclaimed Poole. "See here, parson," he swallowed hard, "I may as well tell you. That was a put-up job. I meant to smash you."

"Then we're quits," replied the parson, coloring, "for—I meant to smash you."

Poole thrust out his hand. The parson grasped it.

Pilcher stared. But even when he was alone with his partner he made no allusion to the occurrences of that afternoon.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Humbling of Martin Young.

Martin Young was out of sorts. The Henleys saw that plainly when he passed the house, with a drove of cattle, on his way to Eureka. He was on horseback and so were the twomen with him. They lifted their sombreros as they passed, but Martin glanced neither to the right hand nor the left.

"He's been like a bear with a sore head ever since matters were settled between Minnie and Will," said Frank.

"I should have liked to send some message to Clement," sighed Mary.

"You'd better not mention Clement's name to him," said Frank. "He thinks Clement was at the bottom of his trouble with Minnie."

"How could he be?" cried Mary indignantly.

"Oh, she asked his advice or something of the sort. Minnie's a nice girl, but she's a fool," said Frank.

The cattle ran lowing down the hills. The splendid October air was in their nostrils. A thin crisp of snow was under their feet. Martin, being in haste to get them down to Eureka before more snow should come to block the way, took advantage of their high spirits and fine physical condition, and by noon had reached the field outside the town where Shed Wellman was to meet him.

"I suppose you'll stay over Sunday?" said Shed, when their business had been concluded.

"I'd calc'lated to," returned Young.

"Better drop in and hear our new minister," suggested Shed. "By the way, he's a friend of yours, ain't he? He told me he knew you—got a horse from you up at Galena."

Martin grunted.

"Mighty smart young feller!" commented Shed. "Awfully popular around here. Goes in for everything, has fine sociables—Jack makes the lemonade for 'em—a barrelful every time."

"There'd have to be a barrelful if Jack made it." Martin grinned for the first time.

"He don't put anything in," Shed made haste to add.

"Don't he?" cried Martin. "Wanter bet?"

"I know he don't," insisted Shed. "I guess I've drunk enough of it. See here," he turned before mounting his horse. "You don't wanter circulate any gossip of that sort 'round here. It might make trouble." He swung himself into the saddle and rode away. There was an evil look in Martin's small, reddish-brown eyes as he, too, mounted and rode after Shed.

He went straight to the Widow McClintock's boarding-house and the very first thing he said to the tableful of boarders was, "I hear Jack Perry's makin' the lemonade for the Methodist sociables and that's why," with a grimace, "they draw such a crowd."

"He don't put in any 'budge,' said an honest-faced young miner. "Parson wouldn't allow it.

"Don't be too sure o' that!" cried the widow, with a toss of her head.

"The parson ain't so all-fired different from other folks," she declared, with acidity. She had not forgiven Vaughan for his sympathy with the attempt to pull Dick out of the McClintock trap.

"That's just as sure's you live," declared Martin Young. "You wanter look out for these fellers that don't smoke, nor chew, nor drink, nor swear, nor shave——"

"He can fight," broke in the honest-faced miner. "He give Poole the kock-out t'other day. Didn't he, Jim?" He appealed to a comrade who sat near him.

"That's what he did, Joe," said Jim. "We seen him."

Then Martin had to hear the whole story. Everywhere he went he heard it. Everywhere he went they spoke of the parson approvingly, admiringly, even.

Martin sickened. "If you knew him as well's I do," he exclaimed.

"What do you know?" they asked him.

He could only bluster in generalities. If he told them about Black Birdie they would say the Parson was smarter than he was. If he told them about Minnie Hollaway tehy would say a fellow deserved to lose his girl if he couldn't hold her.

"You wait; you'll see, one of these days," he replied significantly, and again repeated, "I hear Jack's makin' lemonade for the Parson's sociables, and that's why so many go."

By Sunday afternoon the talk had drifted around to Jack. "If Mart Young comes in while I'm gone, you hang onto him," he said to Pere Hyacinthe. "I've got somethin' to say to him. I'm goin' to meetin' now." Jack rarely missed a Sunday night service.

"I will," said Pere Hyacinthe. He was arranging the tumblers in pyramids on the shelf behind the bar.

Not long after Jack went out Martin appeared. He had found three miners who expressed their willingness to "set in to a game."

The four clumped noisly in and entered one of the small rooms, throwing their hats on the floor. A pack of cards lay on the table. Martin took them up and shuffled them, calling loudly for Pere Hyacinthe to "bring on the moisture."

Martin had already had enough, the bartender decided. He loitered, hoping Martin would forget his order. One of the miners, a tall, good-looking fellow, very trim in his Sunday togs, arose suddenly and flung down his cards. "It's on me again," he said, with a conscious laugh. "I didn't think I'd get stuck again so soon."

"What's the row?" demanded Martin, picking up the hand and running it over. "Oh—that?" Ineffable contempt was expressed in his voice and in his manner as he threw across the room the card which had interrupted the game. It was backed like the others, but on its face it bore an invitation to attend the services at the Methodist church that evening. "Come, set down," he said to the miner; "what in hell's that card to do with our game?"

"Why, it's this way, pard," said one of the others mildly, an old man; "it's kind of an understood thing amongst some of us if the Parson can put one o' them cards o' hisn inter the pack an' we not notice, that fellow's got to go to meetin'. See? I guess's long's the party's broke up I'll go along with you." He, too, arose.

Martin swore furiously. Of all the blasphemed places that he ever got into, this was the most wickedly and shockingly vituperated. He walked angrily out to the bar, demanding his drink. When he returned the room was empty. The third miner had crept out and followed the other two.

He was not left long alone. A company of cowboys entered, riotously, and filled the saloon. To them Martin, now beyond reserve or caution, rehearsed his woes, beginning with the loss of his girl and ending with the loss of his game, blaming the Parson for all. The cowboys drew him on, asked questions, offered sympathy, suggested means of redress, shouting to Pere Hyacinthe every now and then that "'Twas time to f'll-up." Several of them flourished the flasks they already had in their pockets. The bartender kept out of their way and watched for Jack. It was long past the usual time for him to return.

There had been a special meeting of the ways and means committee, which consisted of the Parson and Jack and whoever else Jack could, as he termed it, "haul in." Tonight it happened to be Shed Wellman upon whom he fastened. After conferring with the Parson for a while, the other two men walked away together and renewed, with more freedom, their discussion.

"What I like about him," said Jack, in his customary drawl, "is that he don't 'make a poor mouth.'"

"That's what!" cried Shed, his short, snappy manner offering an amusing contrast to Jack's deliberation. "I've always said there was three kinds of poor, the Lord's poor, the devil's poor and poor devils, and most generally parsons come under the last head; but he don't."

"Not much!" said Jack, with a chuckle. "When he 'goes broke,' he acts as if there was nothin' too good for him."

"Sure!" declared Shed. "He's a regular High Tippy Bob Royal! That's what I told Mart Young yesterday. But Mart can't see any good in him, for some reason or other."

"I may have to deal with Mart," said Jack slowly.

They had neared the saloon. Sounds of the horseplay within floated out to them. Jack quickened his pace. As they mounted the steps they heard Martin Young, quite beyond restraint now, complaining bitterly, while his noisy companions applauded every word.

With one stride Jack was in their midst. It was good to see his great shoulders heave and to catch the gleam in his steel-gray eyes. The talk and laughter ceased. Even Martin was silent for a moment, then he began again, "Nothin' but prayer-meetin's. Jack ain't the same since he made lemonade—." He stopped, his jaw fell, before the look in the saloon-keeper's eyes.

"Go on!" said Jack.

"W-w-w-with a—a stick in it," stammered Martin.

"Go on," said Jack.

"F-for the—the Parson's—sociables! I—I—was only foolin', Jack. Honest, I was only foolin'! Don't shoot, for God's sake, don't shoot!"

"Get down on your knees," thundered Jack, with his revolver at Martin's head, "and say, 'I'm a damn liar!'"

Martin stumbled to his knees. "I'm a damn liar!" he mumbled.

"Stay where you are!" commanded Jack. "And—crawl to the Parson's study and when you get there lick his boot and say again, 'I'm a damn liar.' Go on, now! Crawl!"

There was deathly silence in the room. Martin looked up, saw death in the shining barrel before him, death in the pitiless gray eyes that met his own, and he crawled, across the floor, down the steps, into the street.

His late comrades pressed to the door and stood staring after him. Over at Jackson's, the loiterers on the corner stared, amazed. What was this thing that slowly, painfully, came out and down and up the street? A misshapen quadruped? A monstrous worm?—It could not be a man!

They crossed the street. Others came, from saloon and dance-house and alley, to stare and question. What was it? A man? What was he doing? Why did he do it? They saw the revolver, and Jack, and drew back. On and on Martin crawled, up the hill, painfully, his hands cut by the frozen ground, his head heavy, his heart faint; and behind him, with the revolver—Jack. So they came to the church, to the door of the study. Martin paused.

"Go on," called Jack's voice. He went on.

Vaughan was reading by his desk, under the lamp. Absorbed in his book, he heard nothing. Slowly the door was pushed open. A rough, red-brown head appeared and approached him, hanging down. Two hands, crimsoned and bleeding, struck out over the floor. The creature crawled to him, put out a big swollen tongue, licked his boot, mumbled, "I'm a damn liar," then sprang up and fled.

A long, sinewy arm reached out, on the threshold, caught him, shook him, and hurled him into the night. Vaughan saw for an instant Jack's face, then it, too, disappeared. He had seen the other, in that brief, dreadful moment, the small, blood-shot eyes, the thick, matted beard; and had known it for Martin Young's. And never, in all his life, though he live to be an old, old man, would he see on a human face such a look of unutterable hatred as he saw on that face then.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Crusade for Temperance.

It became known, throughout Eureka and the ranches around, at Galena and Lewis and Ruby Hill, that any one who meddled with the parson would sooner or later have to settle with Jack. Martin Young's experience had told to what lengths Jack would go in adminsitering what he called justice. The affair of Tim Noonan showed that he also meant to keep order.

Tim came into one of the Wednesday night prayer meetings the worse for liquor and flung himself down in the corner by the stove. The heat and the singing of the hymns sent him off to sleep at first, but he awoke, confused and quarrelsome, when the parson began his address.

"I say," he shouted, "tha' ain't so. Nobuddy b'lieves tha' now."

Vaughan had encouraged interruption, when it betokened a desire to get at the truth, or a difference of opinion. But interruption of this sort was not to be tolerated. He stopped preaching and looked at Tim.

"Be silent," he said sternly, "or out you go!"

"Ain't goin' to be silent," returned Tim. "Preachin' lies. 'Tain't so."

Down from the platform stepped the preacher and took Tim by the collar. "You must go out," he said firmly.

"Want any help, Parson?" inquired half a dozen.

"I think not," was the reply. Tim demurred, tried to argue, pulled this way and that, but went, and the services continued.

A few evenings afterward a sober, penitent Tim entered the parson's study and laid on the desk one of the long leather whips used by the mule drivers, known as a "black snake." Without a word he began to pull off his coat.

"What are you doing?" asked Vaughan in surprise.

"Jack Perry told me to come down here and 'peel to the buff,'" said Tim, "and let you lay on till the blood comes, 'cause I done what I did t'other night."

"You didn't know what you were doing," replied the parson, touched by Jack's loyalty and by Tim's submission. "Tell Jack you've apologized and it's all right."

"I hain't, though," said Tim.

"Yes, you have, when you laid that whip on my desk. I'd like to keep the whip." Vaughan had not outgrown a boyish fondness for souvenirs. They shook hands and parted.

This story, too, went abroad and traveled as far as Winnemucca. Not precisely the divinity that hedges a king, but the atmosphere which may surround an obscure Methodist parson when he is squired by such an one as Jack, surrounded by Vaughan. Penrose gave him half a column in the Eureka Sentinel every Monday. His lectures were reported in full. All his movements were chronicled. Katharine clipped every notice and burned the papers.

"But I do wish he was a churchman," she sighed, and laid traps for him with little books entitled "Why I am an Episcopalian" and "The Apostolic Succession," books which Clement meant to read, but somehow never found the time. He was very busy organizing guilds among the young people—a man's club, a woman's sewing society—and flying off to lecture whenever anybody would have him.

In the midst of it all he had a call from Ricker, the Cornish preacher at Ruby Hill.

"Brother Vaughan," said Ricker, "I have had it borne in upon me that ye'll have to preach temperance for a while, until this besottled land awakes to the error of her ways."

"Why, I've been preaching temperance ever since I came here," returned Vaughan.

"Aw know," replied Ricker, "but ye'll have to get out and shout for it, and mek 'em hear. 'Tain't the preachin' from your own doorstep, where they order what they please and take what they like, that works meeracles."

Continued Next Sunday.