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VOL. 1.

SUN RIVER, MONTANA TERRITORY, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1885.

No. 52.

JOHN LARGENT, TOWN AND RANGH PROPERTY

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PATENTS

3-7-77.

New Year's day! The first of January never comes round, nor, I never hear the name of New Year's day mentioned, without thinkin' o' Sid Johnson.

If you've ever been over the North ern Pacific, you may 'a' noticed (tho' 'tain't liable as you would) at a certain point out in Western Mont- ana, a couple of old trees, standin' one on each side of a small creek, just a little ways from the track. They're both on 'em dead, as dead as skinned beavers, without a leaf or thread of bark to 'em.

But there ain't another tree of any kind in sight, dead or alive, nawthin' but just the level prairie, with the creek windin' through it, and the foothills risin' a couple of miles or so back from the road.

There's a terrible history attached to those trees, for a man was hanged on each one of 'em. They say their ain't a tree in all Montana, on which a man's been hanged (an' there's plenty such) as isn't dead. They just withs and died away afore the next spring comes around after the thing's been done.

That's what they say; an' however that may be, you couldn't wish any trees deaden't them two.

You hain't never helped hang a man, praps? an' if you're level, you won't; not unless it should happen to be your own hangin', when the other boys won't surely get along without you. But it's jist the meanest show I ever attended. However much the boys may whoop and hurraw over it; however much the man may 'a' de- served it, a hangin's a hangin', mind you.

They used, long before the railroad came through, to be a camp back ther' among the hills. Gulch City, it was called, but ther' weren't never nawthin' to it. The ground was poor, nor ther' weren't enough of it. But Lord! Alder Gulch and Last Chance 'd jist filled the country clean full of crazy men; an' a chap hain't got but to sink a prospect hole and say he took an ounce of gold dust out of it, for 'in to come tumblin' in like stones out of a tail race. I was at Helena when the Gulch City excitement broke out, an' I got in with the first gang.

Within three weeks arter that ther' wer' near two thousand men in camp, an' some pretty hard ones amongst 'em. But I don't know as on 'em wer' worse'n Sockdodger Jim. He wer' a son of-a-gun!

He came from California with a bad name to Virginia City. Ther' he shot a pard 'cos he got a new pair of pants. The day arter he arrived in Gulch City he shot a man over a gambler's scrape—but not to kill; an' three weeks later he killed a woman on the street in broad day- light. But we had got a Vigilance committee by then, and the whole camp agreed as Sockdodger Jim ought to go. Before sunrise the next morning he had gone. But I don't know as that right hand tree (the one nearest the track) had much call to mope and die 'cos such a man as Jim 'd been hanged on it.

With the left hand tree it wer' differ- ent. That is, if possible the danger of the two; jist a shattered trunk some twelve feet to fifteen feet high, and one broken limb stickin' out at right angles, some eight or nine feet from the ground. That is the limb, an' I tell you that to me as knowned as all the circumstances, ther's sailin' uncommon skeery and reproachful about that limb, standin' there an' refusin' to act with the rest of the tree, but pointin' across the prairie like a dead man's arm. It's bin standin' jist so these dozen years to my knowl- edge, an' never set eyes on it without shuderin' and wishin' to God that some man would go and cut it down.

His name was Johnson—Sid John- son—an' he was the most liked man in camp. He had a heart to him as big as a ten-stamp mill, an' ther' weren't nawthin' as Sid wouldn't do to help a man as was broke. I was batchin' at the time with a queer kind o' Scotch- man, in one of a small clump of cab- ins, up on the hill side. Sid lived alone on the next one to us. Next to him came an empty shack; an' beyond that a woman of the name o' Harring- ton, who did washin'. Next beyond her, and the last cabin of the group, was a man Wiley, who owned some ground just the creek, but never done more'n jist enough work to hold it from being jumped. Ther' was a kind o' mystery attached to him and Mrs. Harrington. The camp was nearly a year old when they came—within a few weeks of one another—an' both

from Iowa. In those days no one ever troubled his head about another man's record; an' how he spent his time was jist his own business and no one else's. But women was scarce in mining camps then, an' was took a good deal of notice of. So Mrs. Har- rington hain't bin in Gulch City more'n a month before it was pretty well known as it weren't any use for to try an' git acquainted with her, as she didn't want no friends. It was like- wise known that though she and Wiley always appeared as strangers in public, never speaking to one an- other, they was really pretty intimate, and used to spend most o' their time in each other's cabins. We boys used to laugh over it, and wonder what their reason was for 'keepin' so al- mighty close. Sid, as livin' next to 'em, was a kind of authority on their doings, and used to come round to our cabin every mornin' with a fancy bulletin o' their intimacy. "Ther-mo- meter 'way up," he used to say, "erops down well," when they'd bin particularly friendly; a "stiff breeze from N. E." a cold day for Mrs. H., when Wiley had been away to his claim. But beyond that we none of us heard or saw much of either of 'em; and what we did see of Wiley down town none of us liked extra well. He seemed a quiet, slinkin' kind of a chap and made no friends.

It was a long in August, I think, that Wiley and Mrs. H. came to Gulch City, an' by December they'd pretty well dropped out o' notice. We'd givin' up guessin' what they was ther' for, and Sid's bulletins had ceased. We'd had a spell of frost along to the end of November, but by the middle of December the snow had gone again and the last two weeks of the old year were jist splendid weather; cold, but sunshiny and a day's work was as easy as eatin' yer meals. My Scotch claim and I used to take it in turn to git up and cook breakfast in the morn- ings, and on New Year's Eve it fell to my turn.

Well, I turned out soon after day- light and started a fire, and grabbed a pail to go down to the creek for water. The trail down ran from our door back of Sid's cabin and the empty one, cos we stood a bit higher up hill, and then cut round the corner of Mrs. Harrington's place and right past her door. It was a mighty sharp mornin', and I was joggin' down hill, stampin' my feet, with the pail clankin' in my left hand, round back of the two cabins and down past Mrs. H.'s corner, when jist as I rounded her corner I give a jump which nearly sent me off my balance, and away went the pail down the hill. There, right in my way, lay Mrs. Harrington on her side, her dress all bloody and a pool of blood soakin' down hill from under her.

I guess I stood there for three min- utes without movin'. Then I stooped down, hollerin' to the other boys to come out, as loud as I could, and felt her face which was damp and chilled with the frost. But her body was warm, and I thought I could feel her heart beat. By this time Sid and my partner were out, thinkin' I'd seen a bear or summat, and I called to 'em to come and help me carry her into the cabin. As soon as we'd got her into her cot, Sid went off down town after a doctor, and Craig (that was the Scotchman) and me, we undid her dress, lit a fire and set to cleanin' her hands till the doctor came.

With the doctor came Wiley. We all watched him closely, but he was quiet and slinkin' as ever. Very much shocked, of course, but if he had any fear for himself he hid it dog-gone well. The doctor said she was alive, but couldn't live more'n a few hours, and it was doubtful whether she'd ever become conscious again. The sun was gettin' up by this time, and the news that the wash-woman up on the hill had been shot was all over camp. By 10 o'clock, half the camp was crowded round the cabin. The sick woman was still unconscious; the doctor, Craig, myself and one or two others were round the bed, and Sid and Wiley was standin' at the door keepin' the crowd out. We was all talkin' in an undertone, wonderin' how it was no one had heard the shot fired, and keepin' an eye all the time on Wiley, to see how he behaved.

Suddenly there came a "sh" from the doctor, and the cabin was so still you might have heard the sunlight creepin' along the floor. She had come to. For a long time she neither spoke nor moved, but lay with her eyes starin' in the doctor's face. A- ter a bit she seemed to remember things an' tried to raise herself. The doctor an' me helped her, an' we got her up onto her left elbow. Her eyes wandered around the room a minute, till they rested on the pair—Sid and Wiley—by the door. Then she stated, an' raisin' her left arm till her finger

pointed towards them, began to speak in a hoarse whisper, which, in that silence, made yer blood run cold.

"He did it," she said, pointin' at the door. "Don't let him escape. He de- serves to hang. Johnson did it. It was because—oh!"—and she sank back again.

Everyone hurried up to the bed, but the doctor motioned 'em back. "No good, boys," said he, "she is gone now, sure," and she was dead.

I said everyone hurried up to the bed. No. Sid Johnson did not. When he heard his come from her lips, he had started a step toward her, and stopped again. His face was as pale as the dead woman's. He raised one hand as if to speak, and his lips moved, but not a sound came from his throat. Then he turned round and walked in a dazed and staggerin' way out of the door, and the crowd divided to let him pass back to his cabin.

Johnson! Sid! the open-hearted, cheery friend of the whole camp! I seemed impossible. Still, a dyin' woman's words was strong evidence. But it warn't any of our business. We had full confidence in our Vigilance committee, an' we were all glad, I guess, to leave the responsibility of the affair to them. Ther' was to have bin a kind o' variety entertainment that night which some o' the boys had bin gittin' up under Sid's lead. But Sid didn't come out of his cabin all day, an' the camp didn't feel hungry for no shows jist then.

Next mornin' Johnson's body was hangin' from that limb o' the left hand tree. "3-7-77" had done its work quietly enough during the night; an' though everyone in camp felt broke up an' uneasy about it, no one dared to murmur agin' the Vigilantes.

After that Craig an' me concluded we'd shift our cabin. We didn't think it was healthy so high upon the hills, for the death rate had been too heavy of late there. So we moved down the gulch a ways. Once or twice we went up to the old cabin to fetch away things we'd left behind, an' we always noticed as Wiley's door was shut. But we didn't think much of it, as he had never gone about any mornin' was necessary, or jist to see the woman next door; an' now that she was none it seemed nat'ral as he should shut himself up a bit. So it may have bin two or three weeks be- fore people began to notice his ab- sence much; then some men who lived on the opposite side of the gulch, said, down in a saloon one day, as he hadn't seen any smoke from Wiley's cabin since the day of the murder. Then the boys took to watchin', an' next day a gang went up to see what was up. The door was locked, an' when it was broken in, the cabin was empty an' showed no sign of havin' bin lived in for weeks.

I went up to my old cabin while they were in ther'—maybe a dozen of them. So I went in too. His blank- ets were gone an' his rifle. Half a side of bacon was lyin' on the table an' a knife by it, as if he had cut off a piece the last thing to take with him. A sack half full of beans was lyin' on its side in the middle of the floor, as if he had helped himself to those, too, an' the place was littered with coffee.

But there was another thing there, which jist made every one of us feel sick when we saw it, an' it broke up our Vigilance committee. It was a packet of letters, all postmarked 'Iowa,' and written by Mrs. Har- rington (she called herself Harrison in the letters, but we knew the writing to Wiley before they came to Gulch City. But the horrible, skeery thing about 'em was, that they were not addressed to him as Wiley, but as "Mr. R. John- son." Some notes of his, too, in the cabin were also signed "R. J." and "Robert Johnson." Poor Sid!

Inquiries were made to the town in Iowa, and after three or four months we got news that a man called John- son, answerin' to Wiley's description, had been wanted ther' by the police for a year and more, for some big robberies which he was supposed to have committed, with the help of a woman called Harrison. The mur- dered woman had evidently known Wiley for years by the name of John- son; and the question was, which JOHNSON DID SHE MEAN?

I think I've known from the mo- ment I set eyes on those letters; an' think every man in Gulch City knew, too. An' now praps you kin under- stand why it is I never see that tree standin' out on the Montana prairie without wishin' to God that some- body would cut it down, an' why I find it hard to keep my thoughts off the Sid on New Year's Day.—H. P. ROBINSON.

136 Holonites have petitioned the legislature to repeal or modify the drummers' license law.

THE V. P. S. CLUB.

"What in the name of thunder!" said the president, as he rose from the paradisaical chair, "is that 3-7-77 doing over the archives of the museum? I hope the custodian ain't been stealin' a mule. Joe, you should be very Fete-icular who you confide in when visit the would-be future seat of Dear- born county."

"It was my intention this evening," resumed Bro. Shooeat, "to deliver an epitomic lecture on 'Paradise Lost,' but the illogical disesteem in which the Montana cowboy is held by the Hon. gentlemen on 'Indian affairs' has got to be repudiated. Supposin' the cowboy has cut-out, corralled and roped-in the principal part of the Montana Legislature, its no stigma on his name. As long as he don't paint the legislative chamber a pale N. O. red—a la Smith-Markin—or shoot off anything but his mouth, the weather-gage politician has no occu- sion to buck. The cowboy has been misrepresented, the Gone Murphy few being taken as a type of the class. A more false and pernicious idea could not be imagined. The average cow- boy is a mild, rollickin', brave, free hearted fellow, the beau ideal of a picturesque frontier soldier. He fears nither man nor the devil, but always respects a woman. His motto, 'nemo me impune lacessit'—don't walk on the fringe of my chaps—has received a world-wide shout of applause. He never gets beastly drunk, but al- ways recklessly so. But taken all in all he counts for something in Mont- ana, and don't you forget it. Not- withstanding all this," continued the president, "some people have got the gall to call a bull calf a cowboy."

Cold Slaw—"Mr. President, I have placed on the table a resolution which I hope every member will sign."

Bro. Shooeat—"Will the secretary please favor us with the resolution?"

The secretary complied.

"Resolved, That I will mind my own business during the year 1885, exclusively, and with the greatest pos- sible energy, prudence and industry."

"Who put up to this business, Mr. Forrest," exclaimed the president in a voice that would have done credit to an anvil chorus. "Have you any political civil service axe to grind, or some snowed-under sinecure office? Ain't it a dig at the projectors of that tri-weekly petition for a tri-weekly stage line from Flat creek to Choteau? You might get the inmates of a deaf and dumb asylum to sign—that they would not sign—but the member that would place his autograph on that paper would rob a clothes line. The next thing in order will be for you to run around with a petition making Lost Zeal the county seat of Dearborn county instead of Augusta. You are jist philanthropist enough to sign the resolution and then inform the kids that Kon Kringle is a chim- era, or that Santa Claus a myth. I'll veto, five to, and kick the stuffin' out of the first member that signs that paper. "And," continued the presi- dent, "I've jist got enough philopro- genitiveness about me—"

"You haven't got about four cords of that for sale!" chimed in Mr. House- damp.

"See here, Reservation," said Bro. Every; "it wouldn't hurt you a damn bit if you would take about 4 cords of that up to the head of the Dear- born. Now that court is over in Hel- ena, it would be safe in taking the trip."

The following were proposed for membership: Wild Bill, Old Tooth Brush, Lopsided Tom and Bellows Doyle.

"In Chicago," said Bro. Shooeat, they kill and dress a hog in two min- utes. I don't see what there is to pre- vent us from proposin', initiatin', conferin' up to the 73d degree, and collectin' 6 months dues all in the same night. Mike, you go over to the Pioneer, and also to the Senate, and tell the boys that we will initiate them to-night."

THE INITIATION.

"Was the engineer and fireman killed, Mr. Doyle?" asked the president.

"I wasn't in no railway collision," replied Bellows.

"Who grave-yarded you left optical glimmer?" enquired Bro. Every; "Who niggered your peeper? Ain't got it in mourning for that fawn you killed in Lime Kiln canyon, have you? Kind of a Faugh-a-Ballagh, Dotny Brook Fair racket wasn't it?"

"I ran into the postoffice," said Mr. Doyle.

"That settles it. They took you for a dead letter, and stumped you in the eye," said Bro. Shooeat.

23d degree. Tooth Brush's coat that Bill used was badly used up. After the initiation, the secretary read the communications.

COMMUNICATIONS.

The first was a very polite note from the Mother Hubbard Woman's Tights Union, enquiring if they could have the use of the hall for their weekly meetings. "Certainly," said the president adding, "the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rocks the world."

The next was a letter from Prof. C. B. Candy, of Great Falls. The Pro- fessor had received good offers to open a rink at other towns—notably Patrickville. But preferred to estab- lish his great roller skating rink in Umbrella hall. Rent no object.

"While we appreciate the far-sight- edness of Mr. Candy in seeing that Augusta will be the county seat, we cannot grant his request," said the president. "There is no doubt but that Amos would give us a bonus. But there are several reasons why we should not encourage roller skating here. In the first place Great Falls is the most appropriate place in the Territory for a rink. The name of the town is a hint to beginners, and anyone that wants to bring Great Falls up to Augusta, is apt to lose his end. But the most important objec- tion is our regard for the ladies. Two dances and a W. R. Union weekly are bad enough, but when it comes to adding another night for roller skat- ing, I think it would be extending the thing a little too far. We would have to put a new floor in about once a month."

Mr. Camecack enclosed two recipes. The first to take grease spots off the kitchen floor. "Apply a red hot brand- ing iron to the spot. You run a big risk of setting fire to the house, but keep on, you'll get the grease out."

The other was a recipe for making old-fashion pumpkin pie: "Take the pumpkin, cut it open then—Dear, Emma, I will be open Sunday night, if John goes to the pole jist Satur- day. Everything is frozen stiff up. Let me know if you got the fl—"

"That is all," said the secretary.

"And its enough," replied Brother Shooeat. "I always did have some sympathy for that young man in his r'le for life, but I wish now that the Indians had caught him."

NEW BUSINESS.

"Can any of the members inform me who dug all those graves in the snow, on the musical side of the hall?" asked Blue Beard.

"Those are not graves," said Pop Corn, "they are the marks of Henry's Sunday slippers. You ought to see the tracks of his every-day chinkoos, and you would think a thrashing ma- chine had taken a tumble to itself."

"Talking about little footprints in the snow," said Bro. Shooeat, "re- minds me that this is the time of year when the 4th of July followers of Greeley and Franklin give up all idea of a trip to the North Pole. This is the time of year when the would-be nimrod leaves the woodpile, hunts around for a gun, goes to the moun- tains, comes back frozen, elkless and deerless, to sleigh the deers and take comfort among the buffalos around home. This is no time of year to gad at the garden gate. You are apt to get the cold shoulder if you do. While we are freezing ourselves nearly to death in an overcoat here, Tom Cow, the bully boy in a cutaway coat is en- joying himself within the thermal belt. Where is the man that says 'the ways of the transgressor is hard.' A man to thoroughly get on to the kind of weather we are having now must take a dose of castor oil. That will give him a better idea of the nude truth than a new almanac."

THE ADJOURNMENT.

"All kinds of rumors," continued the president, "are going the rounds regarding my filling up the cellar on Cobble-stone Ranch and moving the well over to the reservation, gotten up by scandal-mongers to ruin my credit."

After Wild Bill had recited a very pathetic poem, entitled, "A Hen is a Rooster, at Night," the meeting ad- journed. NEW PARCE.

TERRITORIAL NEWS.

The Drum Lumber mill produces about \$75,000 in January. A Mr. Buford, of Virginia City, is advertised as the possessor of a ten- months-old calf that weighs 960 pounds. Wells, Fargo & Co. and the North- ern Pacific express company are war- ring on rates. James Bryde tried to force his way into a married woman's house at Glendale, the other evening, while her husband was not at home, and got shot in the leg for his pains.