

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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## THE BLUE RIDGE.

In the early autumn of the year 1849, about half an hour of sunset, I drew rein in front of a large double log-house, on the very summit of the Blue Ridge Mountains of Eastern Kentucky. The place was evidently kept as a tavern, at least so a sign proclaimed, and here I determined to demand accommodation for myself and servant, Bose, a dark-skinned body-guard. Bose and I had been playmates in childhood, and I need hardly say that the faithful fellow was attached to me, as I was to him, and on more than one occasion he had shown his devotion.

There had been a "shooting-match" at the Mountain House that day, and, as I dismounted, I saw through the open window of the bar-room a noisy, drunken and evidently quarrelsome set of backwoodsmen, each of whom was swearing by all possible and impossible oaths that he was not only the best shot, but that he could outfight, outjump, outwrestle, run faster, jump higher, dive deeper and come up drier than any other man on the "mountain."

"I say, Mars Ralph," said Bose, in a low tone, as I handed him my bridle-rein, "I don't like de looks ob dem in-dar. S'pose we go on to de next house; 'taint fur."

"Nonsense, Bose," I replied; "these fellows are only on a little spree over their shooting. We have nothing to do with them, nor they with us. Take the horses round to the stable, and see to them yourself. You know they've had a hard day of it." And throwing my saddle-bags over my shoulder, I walked up the narrow path to the house.

I found, as I have intimated, the bar-room filled with a noisy, turbulent crowd, who one and all stared at me without speaking as I went up to the bar and inquired if I and my servant could have accommodation for the night. Receiving an affirmative reply from the landlord, a little, red-headed, cadaverous-looking specimen of the "clay-eater," I desired to be at once shown to my room, whither I went, but not until I had been compelled to decline a score of requests to "take a drink," much to the disgust of the stalwart bacchanals.

The room to which I was shown was at the far end of a long, two-storied structure, evidently but recently added on to the main building, which it intersected at right angles. A gallery extended along the front, by means of which the rooms were reached. I found my apartment to be large and comparatively well furnished, there being, besides the bed, a comfortable cot, half a dozen "split-bottomed" chairs, a heavy clothes-press, and a bureau with glass. There were two windows, one alongside the door and the other in the opposite end of the room. The first-mentioned was heavily barred with stout oak strips, a protection, I presumed, against intrusion from the porch, while across the latter was drawn a heavy woolen curtain.

In the course of half an hour Bose entered, and announced that the cattle had been attended to, and a few minutes later a bright-faced mulatto girl summoned us to supper.

Supper over, I returned to my room; first requesting to be roused for an early breakfast, as I desired to be on the road by sunrise. Thoroughly wearied with my day's ride, I at once began preparations for retiring, and had drawn off one boot, when Bose came in rather hastily, looking furtively over his shoulder, and then cautiously closing and locking the door.

"Mars Ralph, dar's gwine to be trouble in dis house afore mornin'," he said.

And I saw in a moment that something had occurred to upset the faithful fellow's equilibrium.

"Why, Bose, what is it? What do you mean?" I asked, barely restraining a smile.

"I tole you, Mars Ralph, we'd better trable farder," was the rather mysterious reply. "You see dat yaller gal dere tole me dar would be a muss if we stayed in dis 'founded ole house all night."

By close questioning I elicited the fact that the girl had really warned him that four men whom I had noticed talking together were a desperate set of villains, and probably had designs upon our property, if not our lives. The girl had seen two of them at the stable while I was at supper, and by cautiously creeping into the stall next the one in which they stood, had heard enough to convince her that they meant mischief. Subsequently to this, she also saw the landlord in close confab with the entire

party, and from his actions judged that he was urging them on to their nefarious work.

"I tell you, Mars Ralph, dem white trash ain't arter no good—now you heard me," persisted Bose.

I had begun to think so myself; but what was to be done? The situation was full of embarrassment, and I felt that nothing could be done save to wait and watch, and, by being on the alert, defeat their plans by a determined resistance.

I found that from the barred window, in which there was a broken pane of glass, a good view of the stable could be had. Then for the other window. I crossed the room, drew aside the heavy curtain, and, raising the sash, looked out. A single glance was sufficient to cause me a thrill of surprise, and I gave a low exclamation that instantly brought Bose to my side. Far below, I could see the faint glimmer of water, the low murmur of which came indistinctly up from the depths, while, on a level with what should have been the ground, I dimly saw the waving tree-tops, as they gently swayed before the fresh night breeze, and knew that the window overlooked a chasm, the soundings of which I could only guess at. In other words, the house, or that portion of it, was built upon the very verge of a cliff, the solid rock forming a foundation more lasting than any that could be made by the hands of man. I leaned far out, and saw that there was not an inch of space left between the heavy log on which the structure rested and the edge of the precipice; and then I turned away with a full conviction that if escape must be made, it certainly would not be in that direction. There was nothing especially strange in this; there were many houses so constructed—I had seen one or two myself—and yet when I drew back into the room, and saw the look in Bose's dusky face, I felt that danger, quick and deadly, was hovering in the air. Without speaking, I went to my saddle-bags and got out my pistols—a superb pair of long double rifles, that I knew to be accurate anywhere under half a hundred yards.

"Dar! dem's what I like to see!" exclaimed Bose, as he dived down into his own bag, and fished out the old horse-pistol that had belonged to my grandfather, and which I knew was loaded to the muzzle with No. 1 buck-shot. It was a terrible weapon at close quarters.

The stables in which our horses were feeding could be watched, and by events transpiring in that locality we would shape our actions. I found the door could be locked from the inside, and, in addition to this, I improvised a bar by means of a chair leg wrenched off, and thrust through a heavy iron staple that had been driven into the wall. Its fellow on the opposite side was missing. We then lifted the clothes-press before the window, leaving just room enough on one side to clearly see, and, if necessary, fire through; dragged the bureau against the door with as little noise as possible, and felt that every thing that was possible had been done.

A death-like silence reigned over the place, broken only once by the voice of the colored girl singing as she crossed the stable yard.

I had fallen into a half doze, seated in a chair near the window facing the stable where Bose was on watch, when suddenly I felt a light touch upon my arm, and the voice of the faithful sentinel in my ear:

"Wake up, Mars Ralph; dey's fool-in' 'bout de stable doo' arter de horses, shuah," brought me wide awake to my feet.

Cautiously peeping out, I saw at a glance that Bose was right in his conjecture. There were too of them—one, standing out in the clear moonlight, evidently watching my window, while the other—and I fancied it was the landlord—was in the shadow near the door, which at that moment slowly swung open. As the man disappeared within the building, a low, keen whistle cut the air, and at the same instant I heard the knob of my door cautiously tried.

The thing was now plain. While those below were securing the horses, those above were either attempting to gain access with murderous intent, or else on guard to prevent my coming to the rescue of my property.

A low hiss from Bose brought me to his side from the door where I had been listening.

"Dey's got de hosses out in de yard," he whispered, as he drew aside to let me look out through the broken pane.

"Take the door," I said, "and fire through if they attack. I am going to shoot that fellow holding the horses."

"Lordy, Mars Ralph, it's de tavern-keeper! He ain't no 'count. Drop de big man!" was the sensible advice, which I determined to adopt.

Noiselessly drawing aside the curtain, I

rested the muzzle of my pistol upon the sash where the light had been broken away, and drew a bead upon the tallest of the two men, who stood, holding three horses, out in the bright moonlight.

The sharp crack of the weapon was instantly followed by a yell of pain, and I saw the ruffian reel backward, and measure his length upon the earth, and then from the main building there rang out—

"Murder! Murder! Oh, help!"

Like lightning it flashed across my mind. There were three horses out in the open lot! There was another traveler beside ourselves.

A heavy blow descended upon the door, and a voice roared:

"Quick! Burst the infernal thing open, and let me get at him! The scoundrel has killed Dave!"

"Let them have it, Bose," I whispered, rapidly reloading my pistol. "There, the second panel."

With a steady hand the plucky fellow leveled the huge weapon, and pulled the trigger.

A deafening report followed, and again a shrill cry of mortal anguish told that the shot had not been wasted.

"Sabe us! how it do kick!" exclaimed Bose, under his breath.

The blow had fallen like an unexpected thunderbolt upon the bandits, and a moment later we heard their retreating footsteps down the corridor.

"Dar'll be more of 'em heah 'fore long, Mars Ralph," said Bose, with an ominous shake of the head. "Specks dese b'longs to a band, and of dey comes, an' we still heah, we gone coons for shuah."

This view of the case was new to me; but I felt the force of it. I knew that such bands did exist in these mountains.

A hasty glance through the window from which I had just fired showed me that escape in that direction was impossible. I looked out and saw a man, with a rifle in his hand, dodge around the corner of the stable. He was on guard, and then I knew they had sent off for reinforcement.

Stunned for a moment, I turned round, and stared helplessly at Bose; but he, brave fellow that he was, never lost his head for an instant.

"Bound to leah heah, Mars Ralph," he said, quite confidently. "An' dar aint no way gwyne 'cept tro dat winder," and he pointed to the one overlooking the cliff.

I merely shook my head, and turned to watch again, hoping to get a shot at the rascal on guard.

Bose, left to his own devices, at once went to work. I heard him fussing about the bed for some time, but never looked to see what he was after until he spoke.

"Now den for de rope," I heard him say, and in an instant I caught his meaning.

He had stripped the bed of its covering, dragged off the heavy tick, and the stout hempen rope with which it was "corded." In five minutes he had drawn the rope through its many turnings, and then, gathering the coil in his hands, he threw up the sash, and prepared to take soundings. It failed to touch bottom; but, nowise disheartened, he seized the cotton coverlet, and spliced on. This succeeded, and the cord was drawn up preparatory to knotting it in place of cross-pieces.

In the meanwhile the silence without had been broken more than once. A shrill, keen whistle, such I had heard before, was given by the man on watch, and replied to by some one seemingly a little way off. Then I heard footsteps—soft, cat-like ones—on the verandah outside, showing that the robbers were on the alert at all points.

At length Bose announced the "ladder" ready. It was again lowered from the window, and the end we held was made fast to the bed we had dragged over for the purpose.

"Now, den, Mars Ralph, I go down fust, and see if um strong 'nough to bar us."

And he was half way out of the window before I could speak.

"No, Bose, you shall not," I answered, firmly, drawing him back into the room.

"You must—"

The words were lost in the din of a furious and totally unexpected attack upon the door.

The dull, heavy strokes of the ax were intermingled with the sharp, quick clatter of hatchets as they cut away at the barrier, and once in a while I could hear deep oaths, as though they had been rendered doubly savage by our resistance.

"Here, Bose, your pistol! Quick?" I whispered, and the heavy charge went crashing through, followed by shrieks and curses of rage and pain.

"Come Bose, hurry, or all will be lost."

The brave fellow now wished to insist upon my going first; but he saw that time was wasting, and he glided down

the rope, gradually disappearing in the heavy shadows.

The fall of one of their number had caused only a momentary lull, and I heard them renew the assault with tenfold fury. I dared not fire again, for I felt that every bullet would be needed, when affairs were more pressing.

It seemed an age before I felt the signal from below that the rope was ready for me; but it came, and I let myself down, pausing an instant, as my eyes gained a level with the sill, to take a last look into the room. As I did so, the door gave way, and the blood-thirsty demons poured over the threshold.

I knew that I had no time for deliberate movement. They would instantly discover the mode of escape and either cut the rope or else fire down upon me.

I had taken the precaution to draw on heavy riding-gloves, and my hands, thus protected, did not suffer as much as might have been expected.

With my eyes fixed upon the window, I slid rapidly down, and struck the earth with a jar that wrenched every bone in my body.

Quick as lightning I was seized by Bose, and dragged some paces on one side, and close against the face of the cliff.

Not a second too soon, for down came a volley, tearing up the earth about the foot of the rope where, a moment before, I had stood.

"Thunder, they will escape! After them, down the rope!" yelled a voice, almost inarticulate with rage.

And I saw a dark form swing out and begin the descent.

"Now, Mars Ralph," whispered Bose, significantly, and with a quick aim I fired at the swaying figure.

Without a sound the man released his hold, and came down like a lump of lead, shot through the brain.

Another had started in hot haste and was more than half-way out of the window, when suddenly the scene above was brilliantly lit up by the glare of a torch.

Again the warning voice of the watchful black called my attention to the figure now struggling desperately to regain the room, and, as before, I threw up my pistol, and, covering the exposed side, drew trigger.

With a convulsive effort the wretch, springing far out into the empty void, turned once over, and came down with a rushing sound upon the jagged rocks that lay at the foot of the precipice.

A single look to see that the window was clear—we knew there could be no path leading down for a long distance either way, or they never would have attempted the rope—and we plunged headlong into the dense forest that lined the mountain side.

We got clear, it is true, but with the loss of our animals and baggage; for the next day, when we returned with a part of the Regulators, we found the place a heap of smoldering ashes, and no living soul to tell whither the robbers had fled.

## The Dutch Poor.

Notwithstanding the unsocial character of the Dutch, they are more considerate of their poor than any other people. There are no destitute poor in Holland, although the population is exceedingly dense. The greater portion of the Dutch poor, including orphans, abandoned children, the blind, deaf and dumb, and aged, are provided for in two ways: First, by institutions established by rich individuals, chiefly widows; secondly, by the different religious denominations, deaconries taking the charge of their respective poor; and, thirdly, by societies. The remaining indigent and infirm are supported by the public, generally in the following manner: In the parishes (Gemeente) the expense is taken out of the municipal funds, if the proportion be too great, the difference is paid out of a general relief fund raised by collections or otherwise from property or bequests. Demands on the public generally have seldom occurred, for, except under very unfavorable circumstances, the deaconries and municipalities have always provided for their own poor. The great secret, however, is in the administration, and that no man or woman in health can in Holland, expect to eat bread, find shelter, or be clothed without giving labor or other equivalent in return. The great relief to the country consists in the non-existence of poor rates, the collection of which would be attended, as in England, with great expense and vexation, and the appropriation of which would be productive of, generally speaking, doubtful good, and, to the healthy classes, certain depravity and degradation. Experience has for more than two hundred years proved the excellence of the Dutch plan for supporting the poor, inasmuch as the indigent, whether men, women or children, able to work have never wanted employment, food, clothing, or shelter.

## A California Divorce-Suit.

San Francisco has a divorce suit with sensational accompaniments rarely equaled by the wickedest of Eastern or European cities. The principals are Thomas H. Blythe, a millionaire real-estate owner, and Nellie Firmin, a pretty young woman, who has been both typographer and actress in a minor theater. The latter claims to be Blythe's legal wife and sues for divorce and alimony, while the former maintains that she is nothing more than his mistress, whom he had detected in robbing him, and finally in a cold-blooded plot upon his life. Leagued with her was a disreputable Italian actor, who tried to bribe an associate to murder the millionaire for a large sum of money, which was to be obtained by the raising of a check. This scheme failing, Nellie enterprisingly undertook the job herself. First she tried brandy and strychnine, previously hinting to folks of Blythe's apopleptic tendencies and his liability to sudden death. Thwarted again, a still more desperate role was assumed by this reckless woman, who intended by Blythe's murder to get possession of a large slice of his fortune. One day the latter was warned by an observant friend that Miss Firmin was carrying a pistol. Taking the hint, he purchased a revolver of the self-cocking English bulldog pattern, a deadly weapon, and a dagger, and carried both on his person. A day or so thereafter Miss Firmin was discovered by one of Blythe's tenants prowling about the latter's office, with a revolver in her hand, concealed by a handkerchief. She was heard by him to say she was going to kill his agent because he had wronged her. Blythe became more watchful, and on going home to dinner detected the woman several times looking at him by stealth. They sat down to dinner alone. When the meal was about half finished, Nellie Firmin, with a wicked gleam in her eye, thrust her hand into her bosom and drew out a revolver, saying, "Harry, I'm going to kill you." Snatching his dagger from his breast, he sprang upon her, and, brandishing the knife aloft, said sternly, "Raise that pistol and I'll stab you to the heart!" The woman was felled. For a moment they glared into each other's eyes; then the woman pushed the pistol across the table toward him, saying, "Harry, take the pistol; I wouldn't hurt you for the world." He secured the weapon, and in two hours it was in the hands of Capt. Lees. On the day following, Nellie visited Blythe at his office, and with tears in her eyes said: "Harry, I am going away, and you will never see me any more." And she handed him a bunch of keys. To his amazement he found that the woman had a key to every receptacle in his office and his apartments, not even excepting his trunk and secretary. Among the keys was one to the outside door of his office, which is always locked at night. Where she obtained it is a mystery, unless she had it manufactured especially for her own use.

## The Coffee-Plant in California.

Capt. Peter Hansen, of Clayton, brought to our office this week a bunch of twigs bearing berries about a quarter of an inch in diameter, some of them red, and some a dark purple, almost black, each of them inclosing twin grains, which, though of smaller size, resemble the coffee grains of commerce. The leaves of the plant are of oblate shape, olive green in shade on the upper and a much lighter shade of green on the under surface, averaging about an inch in length by a quarter of an inch in breadth. While none of the berries upon the twigs were mature, those of darkest color are presumed to be the nearest ripe. Capt. Hansen informs us that the plant from which the twigs were taken is the growth of a coffee berry he planted on his place some eight or ten years ago. The berry was taken from some coffee purchased for house use, and planted in the pod containing both grains, just as one is occasionally found in the coffee of commerce. The shrub is now eight or ten feet high and quite full of berries. Capt. Hansen is satisfied that the foreign coffee plant will do well in our climate and soil, and to test the matter has sent a relative in Brazil for a quantity of the seed berries, which he intends planting the coming season.—*Contra Costa (Cal.) Gazette.*

THE Thanksgiving Proclamation of Gov. Van Zandt, of Rhode Island, was as follows: "I appoint Thursday, the 29th inst., as Thanksgiving-Day, and request the people of this State to assemble in their houses for public worship, and return thanks to God for His tender mercies and loving kindness, and may those who are blessed with abundance give liberally to the poor."

THE water contains more organized beings than the surface of the earth.