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HOBOS AS HEROES.

The Tramp Has Many Chances
to Become a Don Quixote.

IT SELDOM PAYS, HOWEVER.

Some Experiences of the Dilapidated
Gentleman Prove That There Is Little
Profit in Being a Hero—Why He
Gave It Up.

[Copyright, 1908, by T. C. McClure.]

"So far as my experience goes," said the dilapidated gentleman as he assumed a careless pose on a park bench, "there is very little cash money in being a hero, but the men who sigh for the title can't win it quicker than to go on the tramp for a couple of months. When I first started in the profession I used to be a bit puffed up over making a hero of myself, but the thing



A GIRL FLYING ACROSS A FIELD WITH A
BULL IN CHASE.

grew stale after a while. As a usual thing there are drawbacks to the heroic business. You go up like a rocket and come down like a barrel of sand.

"One day six or seven years ago as I was taking in the scenery along an Indiana highway I saw a horse and buggy approaching on the gallop. There were a man and woman in the buggy, and the woman was screaming and the man laying the whip on the horse. It was Don Quixote to the rescue. I saw that the female was being abducted, and when the outfit came along I sprang for the horse, caught the bridle, and after being dragged twenty rods I brought him to a halt. The man at once leaped out and disappeared in the woods, and the woman fainted away.

"Don Quixote brought water and revived her and bade her look upon herself as rescued and then drove her to her home, three miles away. She didn't say much en route. She didn't praise my heroism or declare my gallantry. On the contrary, she was no sooner home than she turned on me and gave me fits and threatened me with all manner of calamities. I was driven away in disgrace, and it was only when I reached the next farmhouse that the mystery was solved. The female was a widow—a romantic widow. She had vowed that she wouldn't marry the man with her unless abducted. He came and abducted her. She wanted him to. Her yelling was simply pretense. In making a hero of myself I had interrupted a marriage, and she was as mad as a wet hen about it. The man who had escaped from the buggy sent a constable after me, charging me with an attempted holdup, and I was arrested and given three months in jail as a suspicious character.

"Again in Connecticut about 4 o'clock one afternoon I came along to a farm to hear a woman's screams and to see a girl flying across a field with a bull in chase. Over the highway fence went Don Quixote, with a rock in his hand, and as I cut in between the girl and the bovine I threw the rock and knocked a horn off and checked the pursuit. Then several things resulted. The bull turned out to be an ambling ox. The girl screamed for help. Her father and a hired man came running, and I was set upon and given an old-fashioned lambasting. Just as it was finished a young man came running up, and then the girl fell upon his shoulder with an 'Oh, Dick!'

How He Figured It Out.

"I figured it out that night as I lay under a haystack three miles away. The girl put up a job for the old ox to chase her. She wanted her lover to rescue her. He was slow in catching on, and I cut in ahead of him. I shot only spoiled her plot, but knocked a horn off the pursuer, and the father naturally looked upon me as a villain instead of a hero. I carried two black eyes for a month, but felt that I deserved them.

"I got into a Maryland village one day to find the people all agog over the mysterious disappearance of a young lady from her home. She had gone out for a walk the day before and had failed to return. I had no sooner appeared than suspicion was fastened upon me as a matter of course. Fortunately I had been at work for a farmer for the last three days, and upon his being communicated with by telephone he cleared me of any charge. I was then ordered to move on, and I went. Two miles away I turned into the woods to take a nap, but had not fallen asleep when a man came along and dug a grave not five rods away. He had a big bundle with him and buried it. It was the body of the missing girl, of course.

"When the man had smoothed the grave over and departed I made a bolt back to the village and told the news.

I could give a pretty good description of him, and two hours later they had him under arrest, and nothing was too good for me in that village. Tramp that I was, the sheriff invited me home to supper with him and fitted me out with a fairly good suit of clothes. The murderer was a farmer. At first he seemed stunned. Then he began to grin and chuckle. Then he broke into laughter. The others said that he had gone insane, but I had an uneasy feeling that I was to come down with a dull thud.

"After supper we took him to the woods, and I pointed out the grave of the missing girl. It was opened amid solemn silence. We found a big bundle of clothes and held our noses. A skunk had made its way into his house the day before and odorized many garments, and the man had buried them to take away the taint. I got away before they could hang me, but it was a close shave. As a matter of fact, that sheriff hunted for me for the next four weeks, though the missing girl had returned home all right.

"One summer's day when I had pushed up into northern New York I passed a camp of people on the shores of a lake. A mile beyond and just around a wooded point I saw a young lady in a canoe. About the time I saw her the canoe turned over, and she went into the lake and began screaming. There was a young chap fishing from another canoe a quarter of a mile away, but I didn't notice him. Of course my old jacket and shoes, and in I went to save human life. The first thing I discovered was that the water was not over three feet deep; the next, that the girl was in no danger whatever. She had only to wade ashore and draw the canoe after her. Did she do it? Not a great deal. She was looking toward the other canoe and uttering delightful little shrieks, and she didn't notice me until I was close at hand and had cried out:

"Hang on tight for your life, miss, and I will save you!"

"Go back, you idiot!" she answered.

"But I have come to save you!"

"Go back or I will have you hunted out of the woods!"

All He Got Was a Wetting.

"I went back, and as I climbed on to dry land the young man in the canoe reached the perishing girl and saved her. He also shook his paddle at me and said he would have me in state prison. Beautifully worked, eh? A marriage probably resulted from the romance, and all I got out of it was a wetting.

"One more case. I was at Watkins Glen to view the scenery. Make no mistake on the dilapidated gentleman. He fairly dotes on scenery. I had penetrated to a wild spot when I heard those same female shrieks and broke into a run to reach the scene. Presently I found a good looking young girl perched on a rock and at its base a little striped snake about a foot long. It was harmless and tender hearted. It could have been put to bed with a baby.

"The viper! The viper!" shrieked the girl as I looked around for the cause of alarm.

"I picked up a branch to kill it, but she protested:

"No, no! Go away, bad man!"

"But the viper, miss."

"Go away or I'll scream for help!"

"I turned and went down the path, and presently a young man passed me on the fly and destroyed that poor little snake and saved a human life. There I was, ready to perish in that girl's behalf, and she never gave me the slightest show. I met the pair two hours later as they were walking arm in arm, and while she hung back the young fellow came up to me as bold as a sheep and shook his fist under my nose and warned me to begone from thence or suffer such consequences as would paralyze my physical system for the next hundred years. You people that stick here in the cities get bumped by a street car now and then or lose your money by some con game, but if you want real excitement and romance mixed together you must take to the road and become a dilapidated gentleman."

M. QUAD.



Mamma Fish—Well, well! And I told that boy not to leave the yard.

The Whittier.
"Always be ambitious, my boy," said the great philosopher. "You may find a niche in the hall of fame."

"Sure!" replied the youngster with the big barlow knife. "And if I don't find one I'll cut one."—Chicago News.

Wisdom of Mother.
"My husband," said the fair bride, "says I am his right hand."

"I hope," rejoined her mother, "that he isn't like that man who never lets his right hand know what his left hand does."—Minneapolis Journal.

Giving Him a Hint.
Mr. B.—It is hard to tell a woman's age by her looks.

Mrs. B.—I should hope so. Why, this old hat of mine makes me look like sixty!—Philadelphia Bulletin.

1909

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