

HE MAN WHO KNOWS IT ALL.

[Written for the Globe.]

When starting out in early life, I had a fund of knowledge. I knew it all, and took the pains of learning to conceal. I could scan the metered vault above and wisdom's wealth reveal. I had but one deficiency. Experience was lacking. And then experience was taught. If one had lots of tacking. Commercial life was lucrative. And here help ambition. So unto commerce old I turn, Much to my own confusion. In unity there's strength, they say. I took a business partner, one Who knew just what to do. That's where I'm matter gets involved. The fact does seem so funny. He furnished the experience. While I put up the money. Affairs went smooth till recently. When we agreed to split. I wanted nothing but my share. While he claimed all the meat. He showed the book to prove his claim. The figures told the story. What could I do but surrender? He gave me all the glory? I've learned a thing or two since then. Some facts you'll all admit. The man who thinks he knows it all. Don't know a little bit. And he who thinks he knows no one else. Is half so shrewd or skilful. Will some day meet a big surprise. To vanity so willing.

—G. Whit.

THE SHERIFF OF SISKIYOU.

BY BRET HARTE.

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Dawson was not astonished, the next morning, to see Maj. Overstone and the half-breed walking together down the gully road. For he had already come to the conclusion that the major was planning some extraordinary reprisal against the invaders that would insure the perpetual security of the camp. That he should use so insignificant and unimportant a tool now appeared to him to be quite natural, particularly as the service was probably one in which the man would be sacrificed. "The major," he suggested to his companions, "isn't going to risk a white man's skin when he can get an Injin's hide handy."

The reluctant, hesitating step of the half-breed as they walked along seemed to give some color to this hypothesis. He listened sullenly to the major as he pointed out the strategic position of the bar. "That wagon road is the only approach to Wynyard, and a dozen men along the rocks could hold it against a hundred. The trail that you came by, over the ridge, drops straight into this gully, and you saw what that would mean to any blanked fools who might try. Of course, we could be shelled from that ridge if the sheriff had a howitzer, or the men also knew how to work one, but even then we could occupy the ridge before them. He paused a moment and then added: "I used to be in the army, Tom; I saw service in Mexico before that cub you got away from had his first trousers. I was brought up as a gentleman—blank it all—and here I am!"

The man slouched on by his side, casting his sly, furtive glances from left to right as if seeking to escape from these confidences. Nevertheless the major kept on through the gully, until reaching the wagon road they crossed it and began to ascend the opposite slope, half hidden by the underbrush and larches. Here the major paused again and faced about. The cabins of the settlement were already behind the bluff; the little stream which indicated the "bar," on which some perfunctory mining was still continued, now and then rang out quite clearly at their feet, although the bar itself had disappeared. The sounds of occupation and labor had at last died out in the distance. They were quite alone. The major sat down on a boulder, and pointed to another. The man, however, remained sullenly standing where he was, as if to account strongly as possible the enforced companionship. Either the major was too self-absorbed to notice it, or accepted it as a satisfactory characteristic of the half-breed race. He continued confidently:

"Now look here, Tom! I want to leave this cursed hole and get clear out of the state! Anywhere!—over the Oregon line into British Columbia, or to the coast, where I can get a coasting vessel down to Mexico! It will cost money, but I've got it! I'll take a lot of risks, but I'll take them! I want somebody to help me—some one to share risks with me, and some one to share my luck if I succeed. Help to put me on the other side of the border line, by sea or land, and I'll give you a thousand dollars down before we start—and a thousand dollars when I'm safe."

The half-breed had changed his slouching attitude. It seemed more indolent on account of the loosely hanging

his ragged blouse stripped off his waist belt, and as dexterously slipped it over the ankles of the struggling man.

It was all over in a moment. Neither had spoken a word. Only their rapid panting broke the silence. Each probably knew that no outcry would be overheard.

For the first time the half-breed sat down. But there was no trace of triumph or satisfaction in his face, which wore the same lowering look of disgust as he heaved upon the prostrate man.

"I want to tell you first," he said, slowly wiping his face, "that I didn't kalkitate upon doin' this in this yer kind o' way. I expected more of a stan' up fight from you—more risk in gettin' you out of the hole—and a different kind of a man to tackle. I never expected you to play into my hand like this, and it goes against me to hev to take advantage of it."

"Who are you?" said the major, panting.

"I'm the new sheriff of Siskiyou." He drew from beneath his begrimed shirt a paper wrapping, from which he gingerly extracted with the ends of his dirty fingers a clean, legal-looking folded paper. "That's my warrant; I've kept it fresh for you. I reckon you don't care to read it—y've seen it afore. It's just the same as y'other sheriff had—what you shot."

"Then this was a plant of yours and that whelp's escort?" said the major.

"Neither him nor the escort knows any more about it than you," returned the sheriff, slyly. "I enlisted as Injin guide or scout ten days ago. I deserted just as reg'lar and nat'ral like when we passed that ridge yesterday. I could be took tomorrow by the sefers, if they caught sight o' me, and court martialed—it's as reg'lar as that! But I timed to have my posse, under a deputy, draw you off by an attack just as the escort reached the ridge. And here I am."

"And you're no half-breed?"

"There's nothing Injin about me that water won't wash off. I kalkitated you wouldn't suspect anything so insignificant as an Injin when I fixed myself up. You see Dawson didn't hanker after me much. But I didn't reckon on your tumbling to me so quick. That's what gets me! You must hev been pretty low down for kempany when you took a man like me inter your confidence. I don't see it yet."

He looked inquiringly at his captive with the same wondering surtness. Nor could he understand another thing which was evident. After the first shock of resistance, the major had exhibited none of the indignation of a betrayed man, but actually seemed to accept the situation with a calmness that

that held his prisoner, he turned and lightly bowed up the hill.

He was absent scarcely ten minutes; yet when he returned the major's eyes were half closed. But not his lips. "If you expect to hold me until your posse comes you had better take me to some less exposed position," he said.

"There's a man just crossed the gully coming into the brush below in the wood."

"None of your tricks, major."

"Look for yourself!"

The sheriff glanced quickly below him. A man with an ax on his shoulder could be seen plainly making his way through the underbrush not a hundred yards away. The sheriff instantly clapped his hand upon his captive's mouth, but at a look from his eyes took it away again.

"I see," he said, grimly. "You don't want to lure that man within reach of my revolver by calling to him."

could have called him while you were away," returned the major, slyly. The sheriff, with a darkened face, loosened the sash that bound his prisoner to the tree, and then, lifting him in his arms, began to ascend the hill cautiously, dipping into the heavier shadows. But it fresh for you. I reckon you don't care to read it—y've seen it afore. It's just the same as y'other sheriff had—what you shot."

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shriveled side bark were crackling and lighted dead limbs falling in all directions. The whole valley, the gully, the bar, the very hillsides they had just left, were blotted out by a creeping, filling, smoke-fog. Here and there a few hillsides they had just left, were blotted out by a creeping, filling, smoke-fog. Here and there a few hillsides they had just left, were blotted out by a creeping, filling, smoke-fog.

"The sheriff had crasped the full meaning of their situation. In spite of his first error—the very carelessness of familiarity—his knowledge of woodcraft was greater than his companions', and he saw their danger.

"Come," he said quickly, "we must make for an opening or we shall be caught."

The major smiled in misapprehension. "Who could catch us here?"

The sheriff pointed to the blazing trees. "That," he said, "in five minutes will have a posse that will wipe us out."

He caught the major by the arm and rushed him into the smoke, and apparently in the direction of the greatest mass of flame. The heat was suffocating, but it struck the major that the more they approached the actual scene of conflagration the heat and smoke were less. In a few moments they were retreating before them and the following wind. In a few moments they were retreating before them and the following wind. In a few moments they were retreating before them and the following wind.

"Go on; it's our only chance," he said imperatively.

They went on, skimming the blackened and smouldering surface which at times struck out spark and flame from their heavier footprints as they passed. Their boots crunched and scorched beneath them; their shreds of clothing were on fire; their breathing became more difficult until, provisionally, they fell upon an abrupt fissure-like depression of the soil, which the fire had leaped, and into which they blindly plunged and rolled together. A moment of relief and coolness followed as they crept along the fissure filled with damp earth and rotted leaves.

"Why not stay here?" said the exhausted prisoner.

"And be roasted like sweet potatoes when these trees catch fire?" returned the sheriff, grimly. "No." Even as he spoke a dropping rain of fire spattered through the leaves, and a splintered redwood, before overlooked, that was now blazing fiercely in the upper wind. A vague and undefinable terror was in the air. The conflagration no longer seemed to obey any rule of direction. The incendiary torch had passed invisibly everything they stumbled out of the hollow and again dashed desperately forward.

Beaten, bruised, blackened, and smoke-grimed, looking less human than the animals who had long since deserted the crest, they at last limped into a "wind opening" in Siskiyou, and the fire had skirted. The major sank exhaustedly to the ground; the sheriff threw himself beside him. Their strange relations to each other seemed to have been forgotten; they looked and acted as if they no longer thought of anything beyond their present distress.

When the sheriff finally arose, and, disappearing for several minutes, brought his hat full of water for the prisoner from a distant spring, they had passed in their flight, he found him where he had left him, unchanged and unmoved.

He took the water gratefully, and after a pause fixed his eyes earnestly upon his captor. "I want you to do a favor to me," he said slowly. "I'm not going to offer you a bribe to do it either, nor ask you anything that isn't in a line with your duty. I think I understand you now, if I didn't before. Do you know Briggs' restaurant in Sacramento?"

The sheriff nodded.

"Well, over the restaurant are my private rooms—the finest in Sacramento. Nobody's there but Briggs, and he has never told. They've been locked ever since I left; I've got the key still in my pocket. Now when we get to Sacramento, I'm taking the key straight to jail I want you to hold me there as your prisoner for a day and night. I don't want to go to jail myself. I want to be in my old rooms; have my meals from the restaurant as I used to, and sleep in my own bed once more. I want to be like a gentleman, and to get you to give evidence against me, or that you want to search the rooms."

The expression of wonder which had come into the sheriff's face at the beginning of this speech deepened into his old look of sly dissatisfaction. "And that's all you want?" he asked slyly. "I don't want no friends—no lawyer! For I tell you straight out, I want to be clear of my name when the law once gets hold of ye in Sacramento."

"That's all. Will you do it?"

The sheriff's face grew still darker. After a pause he said: "I don't say 'no,' and I don't say 'yes.' But," he added grimly, "it strikes me we'd better wait till we get clear of these woods before you think of your Sacramento lodgings."

The major did not reply. The day had worn on, but the fire now completely encircling them opposed any passage in or out of that fateful barrier. The smoke of the burning underbrush hung low around them in a bank equally impenetrable to vision. They were as alone as shipwrecked sailors in an island, girdled by a horizon of clouds.

"I'm going to try to sleep," said the major; "if your men come, you can wake me."

"And if your men come?" said the sheriff dryly.

He laid down, closed his eyes, and, to the sheriff's astonishment, presently fell asleep. The sheriff, with his chin in his gray hands, sat and waited him as the day slowly darkened around them, and the distant lights came out in the lurid intensity. The face of the captive and outlawed murderer was singularly peaceful; that of the captor and man of duty was haggard, wild and perplexed.

But even this changed soon. The sleeping man stirred restlessly and unaccountably. "The wind blows down the ridge where they should come, and they can't get through the smoke and fire."

It was indeed true! In the scarce twenty minutes that had elapsed since the sheriff's return the dry and brittle underbrush for half a mile on either side had been converted into a sheet of flame, which at times rose to a towering height, and at times sank to a level of three shafts, from whose

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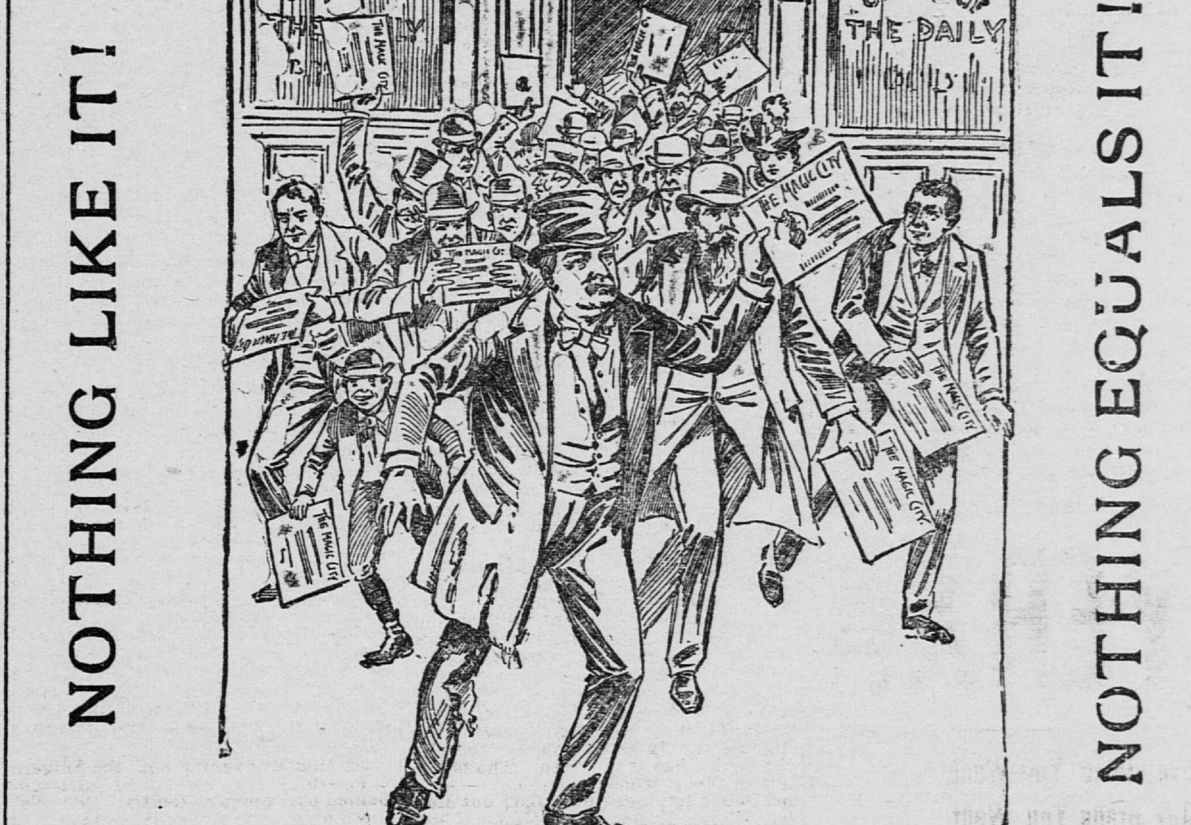
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"THERE," HE SAID SAVAGELY, "GO ON. WE'RE EQUAL."



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trap that had once held his haversack, which was still worn in a slovenly fashion over his shoulder, as a kind of lazy sling for his shiftless hand.

"Well, Tom, is it a go? You can trust me, for you'll have the thousand in your pocket before you start. I can trust you, for I'll kill you quicker than lightning if you say a word of this to any one before I go or play a single trick on me afterward."

Suddenly the two men were rolling over and over in the underbrush. The half-breed had thrown himself upon the major, bearing him down to the ground. The haversack strap for an instant whirled like the loop of a major's sash, and descended over the major's shoulders, pinning his arms to his side. Then the half-breed, tearing open

"AN UNDEFINABLE TERROR WAS IN THE AIR."

his captor lacked. His voice was quite uncaptious as he said: