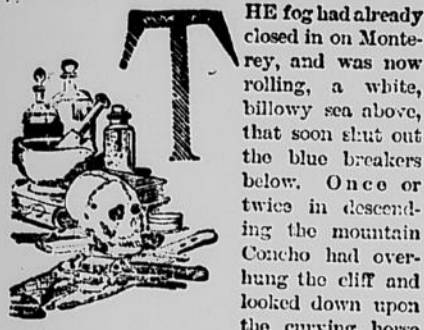


THE STORY OF A MINE.

CHAPTER III. WHO CLAIMED IT.



HE fog had already closed in on Monterey, and was now rolling, a white, billowy sea above, that soon shut out the blue breakers below. Once or twice in descending the mountain Concho had overhung the cliff and looked down upon the curving horse shoe of a bay below him—distant yet many miles. Earlier in the afternoon he had seen the gilt cross on the white-faced Mission flare in the sunlight, but now all was gone. By the time he reached the highway of the town it was quite dark, and he plunged into the first fonda at the wayside, and endeavored to forget his woes and his weariness in aguardiente. But Concho's head ached, and his back ached, and he was so generally distressed that he bethought him of a medico—an American doctor—lately come into town, who had once treated Concho and his mule with apparently the same medicine, and after the same heroic fashion. Concho reasoned, not illogically, that if he were to be physicked at all he ought to get the worth of his money. The grotesque extravagance of life, of fruit and vegetables in California was inconsistent with infinitesimal doses. In Concho's previous illness the doctor had given him a dozen four-grain quinine powders. The following day the grateful Mexican walked into the doctor's office—cured. The doctor was gratified until, on examination, it appeared that, to save trouble, and because his memory was poor, Concho had taken all the powders in one dose. The doctor shrugged his shoulders and—altered his practice.

"Well," said Dr. Guild, as Concho sank down exhaustedly in one of the doctor's two chairs, "what now? Have you been sleeping again in the tule marshes, or are you upset with commissary whisky? Come, have it out."

But Concho declared that the devil was in his stomach, that Judas Iscariot had possessed himself of his spine, that imps were in his forehead, and that his feet had been scourged by Pontius Pilate.

"That means 'blue mass,'" said the doctor, and gave it to him—a bolus as large as a musket ball, and as heavy.

Concho took it on the spot, and turned to go. "I have no money, Senor Medico."

"Never mind. It's only a dollar, the price of the medicine."

Concho looked guilty at having gulped down so much cash. Then he said timidly:

"I have no money, but I have got here what is fine and jolly. It is yours." And he handed over the contents of the precious tin can he had brought with him.

The doctor took it, looked at the shivering volatile mass, and said: "Why, this is quicksilver!"

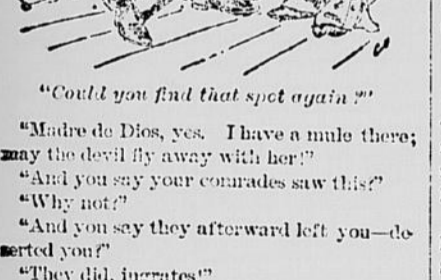
"Concho laughed. "Yes, very quick silver, so!" and he snapped his fingers to show its brightness.

The doctor's face grew earnest. "Where did you get this, Concho?" he finally asked.

"It ran from the pot in the mountains beyond."

The doctor looked incredulous. Then Concho related the whole story.

"Could you find the spot again?"



"Could you find that spot again?"

"Madre de Dios, yes. I have a mule there; may the devil fly away with her!"

"And you say your comrades saw this?"

"Why not?"

"And you say they afterward left you—deserted you?"

"They did, ingrates!"

The doctor arose and shut his office door.

"Hark ye, Concho," he said, "that bit of medicine I gave you just now was worth a dollar. It was worth a dollar because the material of which it was composed was made from the stuff you have in that can—quicksilver or mercury. It is one of the most valuable of metals, especially in a gold mining country. My good fellow, if you know where to find enough of it, your fortune is made."

Concho rose to his feet.

"Tell me, was the rock you built your furnace of red?"

"Si, Senor."

"And brown?"

"Si, Senor."

"And crumbled under the heat?"

"As to nothing."

"And did you see much of this red rock?"

"The mountain mother is in travail with it."

"Are you sure that your comrades have not taken possession of the mountain mother?"

"As how?"

"By claiming its discovery under the mining laws, or by pre-emption?"

"They shall not."

"But how will you, single handed, fight the four? For I doubt not your scientific friend has a hand in it?"

"I will fight."

"Yes, my Concho, but suppose I take the fight off your hands. Now, here's a proposition: I will get half a dozen Americans to go in with you. You will have to get money to work the mine—you will need funds. You shall share half with them. They will take the risk, raise the money, and protect you."

"I see," said Concho, nodding his head and winking his eyes rapidly. "Bueno!"

"I will return in ten minutes," said the doctor, taking his hat.

He was as good as his word. In ten minutes he returned with six original locaters, a board of directors, a president, secretary, and a deed of incorporation of the "Blue Mass Quicksilver Mining Co." This latter was a delicate compliment to the doctor, who was popular. The president added to these necessary articles a revolver.

"Take it," he said, handing over the weapon to Concho. "Take it; my horse is outside; take that, ride like hell—and hang on to the claim until we come!"

In another moment Concho was in the saddle. Then the mining director lapsed into the physician.

"I hardly know," said Dr. Guild, doubtfully. "If, in your present condition, you ought to travel. You have just taken a powerful medicine," and the doctor looked hypocritically concerned.

"Ah,—the devil!" laughed Concho. "what is the quicksilver that is in to that which is not? Hoopa, la Mula!" and, with a clatter of hoofs and jingle of spurs, he was presently lost in the darkness.

"You were none to soon gentlemen," said the American alcalde, as he drew up before the doctor's door. "Another company has just been incorporated for the same location, I reckon."

"Who are they?"

"Three Mexicans—Pedro, Manuel and Miguel—headed by that d—d cock-eyed Sydney duck, Wiles."

"Are they here?"

"Manuel and Miguel, only. The others are over at Tres Pinos idly-gagging Roscommon and trying to rope him in to pay off their whisky bills at his grocery."

"If that's so we needn't start before sunrise, for they're sure to get roaring drunk."

And this legitimate successor of the grave Mexican alcalde, having thus delivered his impartial opinion, rode away.

Meanwhile, Concho the redoubtable, Concho the fortunate, spared neither rinta nor spur. The way was dark, the trail obscure and at times even dangerous, and Concho, familiar as he was with these mountain fastnesses, often regretted his sure-footed Francisquita.

"Care not, O Concho," he would say to himself, "tis but a little while, only a little while, and thou shalt have another Francisquita to bless thee. Eh, shipjack, there was fine music to thy dancing. A dollar for an ounce—'tis as good as silver, and merrier." Yet for all his good spirits he kept a sharp lookout at certain bends of the mountain trail; not for assassins or brigands, for Concho was physically courageous, but for the Evil one, who, in various forms, was said to lurk in the Santa Cruz range, to the great discomfort of all true Catholics. He recalled the incident of Ignacio, a muleteer of the Franciscan friars, who, stopping at the Angelus to repeat the credo, saw Luzbel plainly in the likeness of a monstrous grizzly bear, mocking him by sitting on his haunches and lifting his jaws, clasped together, as if in prayer. Nevertheless, with one hand grasping the reins and his resary and the other clutching his whisky flask and revolver, he fared on so rapidly that he reached the summit as the earlier streaks of dawn were outlining the far-off Sierran peaks. Tethering his horse on a strip of table land, he descended cautiously about until he reached the bench, the wall of red rock and the crumbled and dismantled furnace. It was as he had left it that morning; there was no trace of recent human visitation. Revolver in hand, Concho examined every cave, gully and recess, peered behind trees, penetrated copes of buckeye and manzanita, and listened. There was no sound but the faint sighing of the wind over the pines below him. For a while he paced backward and forward with a vague sense of being a sentinel, but his mercurial nature soon rebelled against this monotony, and soon the fatigues of the day began to tell upon him. Recourse to his whisky flask only made him the drowsier, until at last he was fain to lie down and roll himself up tightly in his blanket. The next moment he was sound asleep.

His horse neighed twice from the summit, but Concho heard him not. Then the brush crackled on the ledge above him, a small fragment of rock rolled near his feet, but he stirred not. And then two black figures were outlined on the crags beyond.

"H—t!" whispered a voice. "There is one lying beside the furnace." The speech was Spanish, but the voice was Wiles.

The other figure crept cautiously to the edge of the crag and looked over. "It is Concho, the imbecile," said Pedro, contemptuously.

"But if he should not be alone, or if he should awaken?"

"I will watch and wait. Go you and affix the notification."

Wiles disappeared. Pedro began to creep down the face of the rocky ledge, supporting himself by chemical and brushwork.

The next moment Pedro stood beside the mooncous man. Then he looked cautiously around. The figure of his companion was lost in the shadow of the rocks above; only a slight crackle of brush betrayed his whereabouts. Suddenly Pedro flung his serape over the sleeper's head, and then threw his powerful frame and tremendous weight full upon Concho's upturned face, while his strong arms clasped the blanket pinioned limbs of his victim. There was a momentary up-heaval, a spasm and a struggle; but the tightly rolled blanket clung to the unfortunate man like cement.

There was no noise, no outcry, no sound of struggle. There was nothing to be seen but the peaceful, prostrate figures of the two men darkly outlined on the ledge. They might have been sleeping in each other's arms. In

the black silence the stealthy tread of Wiles in the bush above was distinctly audible.

Gradually the struggles grew fainter. Then a whisper from the crags:

"I can't see you. What are you doing?"

"Watching!"

"Sleeps he?"

"He sleeps!"

"Soundly?"

"Soundly."

"After the manner of the dead?"

"After the fashion of the dead!"

The last tremor had ceased. Pedro rose as Wiles descended.

"All is ready," said Wiles; "you are a witness of my placing the notifications?"

"I am a witness."

"But of this one?" pointing to Concho.

"Shall we leave him here?"

"A drunken imbecile—why not?"

Wiles turned his left eye on the speaker. They thumbed to be standing nearly in the same attitude they had stood the preceding night. Pedro uttered a cry and an imprecation, "Caramba! Take your devil's eye from me! What see you? Eh—what?"

"Nothing, good Pedro," said Wiles, turning his blank right cheek to Pedro. The infuriated and half-frightened ex-vaquero returned the long knife he had half drawn from its sheath, and growled sulkily:

"Go on, then! But keep them on that ledge, and I will on this." And, visible by side, listening, watching, listening of all things, but mainly of each other, they stole back and up into those shadows from which they might, like evil spirits, have been usefully evoked.

A half hour passed, in which the east brightened, flashed and again melted into gold. And then the sun came up laughingly, and a fog that had stolen across the summit in the night arose and fled up the mountain side, tearing its white robes in its guilty haste, and leaving them fluttering from tree and crag and seam. A thousand tiny blades, nestling in the crevices of rocks, nurtured in storms and rocked by the trade winds, stretched their van and feeble arms toward him; but Concho the strong, Concho the brave, Concho the light-headed spike not nor stirred.

CHAPTER IV.
WHO TOOK IT.

HERE was presiding on the summit. Concho's horse wanted his breakfast.

This protestation reached the ears of a party ascending the mountain from its western face. To one of the party it was familiar.

"Why, blank it all, that's Chiquita."

That d— Mexican's lying drunk somewhere," said the president of the B. M. Co.

"I don't like the look of this at all," said Dr. Guild, as they rode up beside the indignant animal. "If it had been an American, it might have been careless, but no Mexican ever forgets his best. Drive ahead, boys; we may be too late."

In half an hour they came in sight of the ledge below, the crumbled furnace, and the motionless figure of Concho, wrapped in a blanket, lying prone in the sunlight.

"I told you so—drunk!" said the president. The doctor looked grave, but did not speak. They dismounted and picketed their horses. Then crept on all fours to the ledge above the furnace. There was a cry from Secretary Gibbs. "Look you. Some fellow has been jumping us, boys. See these notices."

There were two notices on canvas affixed to the rock, claiming the ground, and signed by Pedro, Manuel, Miguel, Wiles and Roscommon.

"This was done, doctor, while your trust-worthy Greaser locater—d—n him—lay there drunk. What's to be done, now?"

But the doctor was making his way to the unfortunate cause of their defeat, lying there quite mute to their reproaches. The others followed him.

The doctor knelt beside Concho, unrolled him, placed his hand upon his wrist, his ear over his heart, and then said:

"Dead."

"Of course. He got medicine of you last night. This comes of your d—d heroic practice."

But the doctor was too much occupied to heed the speaker's railery. He had peered into Concho's protuberant eye, opened his mouth, and gazed at the swollen tongue, and then suddenly rose to his feet.

"Tear down those notices, boys, but keep them. Put up your own. Don't be alarmed; you will not be interfered with, for here is murder added to robbery."

"Murder?"

"Yes," said the doctor, excitedly, "I'll take my oath on any impost that this man was strangled to death. He was surprised while asleep. Look here." He pointed to the revolver still in Concho's stiffening hand, which the murdered man had instantly cocked, but could not use in the struggle.

"That's so," said the president; "no man goes to sleep with a cocked revolver. What's to be done?"

"Everything," said the doctor. "This deed was committed within the last two hours; the body is still warm. The murderer did not come our way, or we should have met him on the trail. He is, if anywhere, between here and Tres Pinos."

"Gentlemen," said the president, with a slight preparatory and half-judicial cough, "two of you will stay here and stick! The others will follow me to Tres Pinos. The law has been outraged. You understand the court?"

By some odd influence the little group of half-cynical, half-trifling and wholly reckless men had become suddenly sober, earnest citizens. They said: "Go on," nodded their heads, and betook themselves to their horses.

"Had we not better wait for the inquest and swear out a warrant?" said the secretary, cautiously.

"How many men have we?"

"Five."

"Then," said the president, summing up the Revised Statutes of the state of California in one strong sentence, "then we don't want no d—d warrant."

CHAPTER V.
WHO HAD A LIEN ON IT.

HE time was noon at Tres Pinos. The three pines from which it gained its name, in the dusty road and hot air, seemed to smoke from their balsamic spires. There was a glare from the road, a glare from the sky, a glare from the rocks, a glare from the white canvas roofs of the few shanties and cabins which made up the village. There was even a glare from the unpainted redwood boards of Roscommon's grocery and tavern, and a tendency of the warping floor of the veranda to curl up beneath the feet of the intruder. A few miles, near the watering trough, had shrunk within the scant shelter of the corral.

Then we don't want no d—d warrant."

The grocery business of Mr. Roscommon, although adequate and sufficient for the village, was not exhausting or overtaxing to the proprietor. The refilling of the pork and flour barrel of the average miner was the work of a brief hour on Saturday nights, but the daily replenishment of the average miner with whisky was arduous and incessant. Roscommon spent more time behind his bar than his grocer's counter. Add to this the fact that a long shed-like extension or wing bore the legend, "Cosmopolitan Hotel, Board or Lodging by the Day or Week. M. Roscommon," and you got an idea of the variety of the proprietor's functions. The "hotel," however, was more directly under the charge of Mrs. Roscommon, a lady of thirty years, strong, truculent and good-hearted.

Mr. Roscommon had early adopted the theory that most of his customers were insane, and were to be alternately bullied or placated, as the case might be. Nothing that occurred, no extravagance of speech nor act, ever ruffled his equilibrium, which was as dogged and stubborn as it was outwardly calm. When not serving liquor, or in the interval while it was being drunk, he was always wiping his counter with an exceedingly dirty towel—or indeed anything that came handy. Miners, noticing this purely perfunctory habit, occasionally supplied him slyly with articles inconsistent with their service—fragments of their shirts and underclothing, flour sacking, tow, and once with a flannel petticoat of his wife's stolen from the line in the back yard. Roscommon would continue his wiping without looking up, but yet conscious of the presence of each customer.

"And it's not another drop you'll get, Jack Brown, until ye've wiped out the black score that stands agin ye." And it's there ye are, darlint, and it's here's the bottle that's been lukin' for ye sias Saturday." And what hev you done with the last I sent ye, ye devil of a McCorkie, and here ye back that drunk entirely wild dipping until the pork had to give ye the best sides, and ye spending your last cent on a rare into Gilroy. Whist! and if it's for fighting ye are, boys, there's an ill-gifted bit of sod beyond the corral, and it may be meself 'll come out with a stick and be sociable."

On this particular day, however, Mr. Roscommon was not in his usual spirits, and when the clatter of horses' hoofs before the door announced the approach of strangers, he absolutely ceased wiping his counter, and looked up as Dr. Guild, the president and secretary of the new company strode into the shop.

"We are looking," said the president, "for a man by the name of Wiles, and three Mexicans known as Pedro, Manuel and Miguel."

"Ye are?"

"Ye are?"

"Fain, and I hope ye'll find 'em. And if ye'll get from 'em the score I've got agin 'em, darlint, I'll add a blessing to it."

There was a laugh at this from the bystanders, who, somehow, recalled the intrusion of these strangers.

"I fear you will find it no laughing matter,

gentlemen," said Dr. Guild, a little stiffly, "when I tell you that a murder has been committed, and the men I am seeking within an hour of that murder put up that notice signed by their names," and Dr. Guild displayed the paper.

There was a breathless silence among the crowd as they eagerly pressed around the doctor. Only Roscommon kept on wiping his counter.

"You will observe, gentlemen, that the name of Roscommon also appears on this paper as one of the original locaters."

"And sure, darlint," said Roscommon, without looking up, "if ye've no better evidence agin them boys than you have forinst me, it's home ye'd better be riding to wanst. For it's meself as hasn't stirred fut out of the store the day and night—more betoken as the boys I've served kin testify."

"That's so; Ross's right," chorused the crowd. "We've been running the old man all night."

"Then how comes your name on this paper?"

"O murder! will ye listen to him, boys? As if every felly that owed me a whisky bill didn't come to me and say: 'An, Misher Roscommon, or 'Moike,' as the case might be, sure it's an ill-giant strike I've made this day, and it's meself that has put down your name as an original locater, and yer fortune's made Mr. Roscommon, and will yer fill me up another quart for the good luck betune you and me. Ah, but ask Jack Brown over yon if it isn't sick that I am of his original locaters."

The laugh that followed this speech, and its practical application, convinced the party that they had blundered, that they could obtain no clew to the real culprits here, and that any attempt by threats would meet violent opposition. Nevertheless the doctor was persistent:

"When did you see these men last?"

"When did I see them, is it? Bedad, what with sarvin up the liquor and keeping me counters dry and swate, I never see them at all."

"That's so, Ross," chorused the crowd again, to whom the whole proceeding was delightfully farcical.

"Then I can tell you, gentlemen," said the doctor, stiffly, "that they were in Monterey last night, that they did not return on that trail this morning, and that they must have passed here at daybreak."

With these words, which the doctor regretted as soon as delivered, the party rode away.

Mr. Roscommon resumed his service and counter wiping. But late that night, when the bar was closed and the last loiterer was summarily ejected, Mr. Roscommon, in the conjugal privacy of his chamber produced a legal looking paper. "Read it, Maggie darlint, for it's meself never had the learning nor the parts."

Mistress Roscommon took the paper:

"Shure, it's law papers, making over some property to yis. O Moike! ye havn't been speckulating!"

"Whist! and fwhotz that dirty gray paper wid the sales and flourishes?"

"Fain, it bothers me intirely. Shure it on't in English."

"Whist! Maggie, it's a Spanish grant!"

"A Spanish grant! O Moike, and what did ye give for it?"

Mr. Roscommon laid his finger beside his nose, and said softly, "Whisky!"

APPOLLO BELVIDERE.

Bill Nye Attempts Classic Art—A Towel That Was an Inspiration.

I have taken the liberty to present herewith a marine view of Apollo on his way to the bath rooms at Belvidere. He is accompanied by a crash towel. When he took his bath, he had nothing to do but to remove his laurel wreath and hang it on a nail.

I hope that the art critic will not criticise this picture too closely. It is not prepared for a close scrutiny on the part of the student or any one else.

APOLLO ON HIS WAY TO THE BATH.

I think, however, that the towel was an inspiration on my part, and those who have seen the picture say they are very glad I thought about it.

Apollo was the god of light, also of poetry, music, archery and lawn tennis. He was greatly loved by the Greeks for his poetry, his violin solos and his economy and simplicity in dress. A good, durable laurel wreath would last him the year round.

But it mortified him to be driven from his apartments by the shrill cry of "fire," and to find when he reached the street that he had forgotten his wreath.

Apollo was also recognized as the author of the healing art and the god of prophetic inspiration, as especially manifested in the oracle at Delphi, Ind.

He was greatly beloved by everybody but the clothing men. Many of them came and offered him Waterbury watches of great value if he would come and trade with them, but he said "No."

"If I wear clothes," said he, "other poets will get above their business and want clothes. It is better as it is."

He then twanged his lyre and burst forth into song.—Bill Nye in Chicago Rambler.

SAME THING.

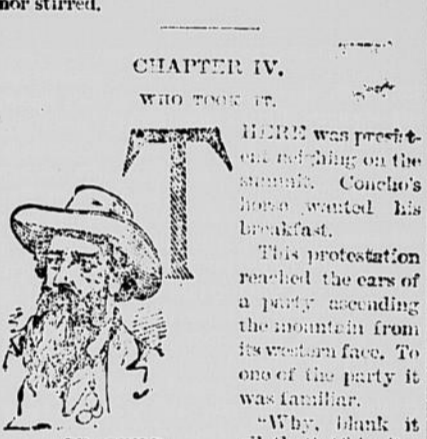
"I see," remarked the proof reader, "that one bad error went through in Miss Lilybud's poem. The boys printed 'padlock' for 'wedlock.' Shall I reprint it corrected in the weekly?"

"No," replied the editor, "let it go just at it is. Everybody will understand it."—R. J. Burdette.



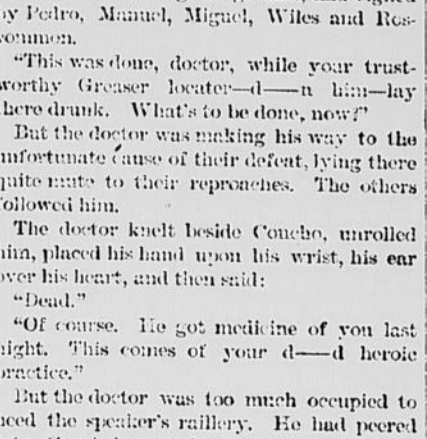
There was a momentary struggle.

CHAPTER IV.
WHO TOOK IT.



DR. GUILD.

CHAPTER V.
WHO HAD A LIEN ON IT.



APOLLO BELVIDERE.

Bill Nye Attempts Classic Art—A Towel That Was an Inspiration.

APOLLO ON HIS WAY TO THE BATH.