

THE STORY OF A MINE

with his lantern. Then followed an outbreak of profanity which I regret, for artistic purposes, exceeds that generous limit which a sympathizing public has already extended to me in the explication of character. Let me state, therefore, that in a very few moments he succeeded in disparaging the characters of his employers, their male and female relatives, the coach builder, the station keeper, the road on which he traveled, and the travelers themselves, with occasional broad epithets addressed to himself and his own relatives. For the spirit of this and a more cultivated poetry of expression, I beg to refer the temperate reader to the Third chapter of Job.

The passengers knew Bill, and sat, conservative, patient, and expectant. As yet the cause of the catastrophe was not known. At last Thatcher's voice came from the box seat: "What's up, Bill?"

"Not a blank lynch pin in the whole blank coach," was the answer.

There was a dead silence. Yuba Bill executed a wild war dance of helpless rage.

"Blank the blank enchanted thing to blank!"

(I beg here to refer the fastidious and cultivated reader to the only adjective I have dared transcribe of this actual oath which I once had the honor of hearing. He will, I trust, not fail to recognize the old classic demon in this wild western abjuration.)

"Who did it?" asked Thatcher.

Yuba Bill did not reply, but dashed up again to the box, unlocked the "boot" and screamed out:

"The man that stole your portmanteau—Wiles!"

Thatcher laughed. "Don't worry about that, Bill. A 'biled' shirt, an extra collar and a few papers. Nothing more."

Yuba Bill slowly descended. When he reached the ground he plucked Thatcher aside by his coat sleeve:

"Yo don't mean to say yo had nothing in that bag yo was trying to get away with?"

"No," said the laughing Thatcher frankly.

"And that Wiles warn't one o' them detectives?"

"Not to my knowledge, certainly."

Yuba Bill sighed sadly, and returned to assist in the replacing of the coach on its wheels again.

"Never mind, Bill," said one of the passengers sympathizingly, "we'll catch that man Wiles at Rawlins sure;" and he looked around at the inchoate vigilance committee, already "rounding into form" about him.

"Ketch him!" returned Yuba Bill, derisively; "why we've got to back to the station and afore we're off agin he's pinte'd fur Clarmont on the relay we lose. Ketch him! He'll be full of such ketches!"

There was clearly nothing to do but to go back to the station to await the repairing of the coach. While this was being done Yuba Bill again drew Thatcher aside:

"I allers suspected that chap's game eye, but I didn't somehow flow for anything like this. I reckoned it was only the square thing to look arter things gen'rally, and specially your traps. So, to prevent trouble, and keep things about ecal, ez he was goin' away, I sorter lifted this yer bag of his outter the tail board of his sleigh. I don't know as it is any exchange or compensation, but it may give yo a chance to spot him agin, or him you. It strikes me as bein' far-minded and squar' and with these words he deposited at the feet of the astonished Thatcher the black traveling bag of Mr. Wiles.

"But, Bill—see here! I can't take this!" interrupted Thatcher hastily. "You can't swear that he's taken my bag—and—and—blank it all—this won't do, you know. I've no right to this man's things, ev' if—"

"Hold your hosses," said Bill gravely; "I ondertook to take charge o' your traps. I didn't—at least that d—d wall-eyed—Thar's a portmanteau! I don't know who's it is. Take it."

Half amused, half embarrassed, yet still protesting, Thatcher took the bag in his hands. "Ye might open it in my presence," suggested Yuba Bill gravely.

Thatcher, half laughingly, did so. It was full of papers and semi-legal looking documents. Thatcher's own name on one of them caught his eye; he opened the paper hastily and perused it. The smile faded from his lips.

"Well," said Yuba Bill, "suppose we call it a fair exchange at present."

Thatcher was still examining the papers. Suddenly this cautious, strong minded man looked up into Yuba Bill's waiting face and said quietly, in the despicable slang of the epoch and region:

"It's a go. Suppose we do."

CHAPTER XIII HOW IT BECAME FAMOUS.



YUBA BILL.

YUBA BILL was right in believing that Wiles would lose no time at Rawlins. He left there on a free horse before Bill had returned with the broken down coach to the last station, and distanced the telegram sent to detain him two hours. Leaving the stage road and its dangerous telegraphic stations, he pushed southward to Denver over the army trail in company with a half-breed packer, crossing the Missouri before Thatcher had reached Julesburg. When Thatcher was at Omaha Wiles was already in St. Louis; and as the Pullman car containing the hero of the "Blue Mass" mine rolled into Chicago Wiles was already walking the streets of the national capital. Nevertheless he had time on route to sink in the waters of the North Platte, with many expressions of disgust, the little black portmanteau be-

longing to Thatcher, containing his dressing case, a few unimportant letters and an extra shirt, to wonder why simple men did not travel with their important documents and valuables and to set on foot some prudent and cautious inquiries regarding his own lost carpet bag and its important contents.

But for these trifles he had every reason to be satisfied with the progress of his plans.

"It's all right," said Mrs. Hopkinson, merrily; "while you and Gashwiler have been working with your 'stock,' and treating the whole world as if it could be bribed, I've done more with that earnest, self-believing, self-deceiving and perfectly-pathetic Rosecommon than all you fellows put together. Why, I've told his pitiful story, and drawn tears from the eyes of senators and cabinet ministers. More than that, I've introduced him into society, put him in a dress coat—such a figure!—and you know how the best folk worship everything that is outre as the sincere thing. I've made him a complete success. Why, only the other night, when Senator Misnancy and Judge Fitzwaddle were here, after making him tell his story—which you know, I think he really believes—I sang: 'There Came to the Beach a Poor Exile of Erin,' and my husband told me afterward it was worth, at least, a dozen votes."

"But about this rival of yours—this niece of Garcia's?"

"Another of your blunders; you men know nothing of women. Firstly, she's a swarthy little brunette, with dots for eyes; and strides like a man, dresses like a dowdy, don't wear stays, and has no style. Then, she's a single woman, and alone; and, although she affects to be an artist, and has Bohemian ways, don't you see she can't go into society without a chaperon or somebody to go with her. Nonsense."

"But," persisted Wiles, "she must have some power; there's Judge Mason and Senator Peabody, who are constantly talking about her; and Dinwiddie, of Virginia, escorted her through the Capitol the other day."

Mistress Hopkinson laughed. "Mason and Peabody aspire to be thought literary and artistic, and Dinwiddie wanted to pique me!"

"But Thatcher is no fool—"

"Is Thatcher a lady's man?" queried the lady, suddenly.

"Hardly, I should say," responded Wiles. "He pretends to be absorbed in his swindle and devoted to his mine; and I don't think that even you—" he stopped with a slight sneer.

"There, you are misunderstanding me again, and, what is worse, you are misunderstanding your case. Thatcher is pleased with her because he has probably seen no one else. Wait till he comes to Washington and has an opportunity for comparison," and she cast a frank glance at her mirror, where Wiles, with a sardonic bow, left her standing.

Mr. Gashwiler was quite as confident of his own success with congress. "We are within a few days of the end of the session. We will manage to have it taken up and rushed through before that fellow Thatcher knows what he is about."

"If it could be done before he gets here," said Wiles, "it's a reasonably sure thing. He is delayed two days; he might have been delayed longer." Here Mr. Wiles sighed. If the accident had happened on a mountain road, and the stage had been precipitated over the abyss, what valuable time would have been saved, and success become a surety? But Mr. Wiles' functions as an advocate did not include murder; at least, he was doubtful if it could be taxed as costs.

"We need have no fears, sir," returned Mr. Gashwiler; "the matter is now in the hands of the highest tribunal of appeal in the country. It will meet, sir, with inflexible justice. I have already prepared some remarks—"

"By the way," interrupted Wiles unfeelingly, "where's your young man—your private secretary—Dobbs?"

The congressman for a moment looked confused. "He is not here. And I must correct your error in applying that term to him. I have never put my confidence in the hands of any one."

"But you introduced him to me as your secretary."

"A mere honorary title, sir. A bravest rank. I might, it is true, have thought to repose such a trust in him. But I was deceived, sir, as I fear I am too apt to be when I permit my feelings as a man to overcome my duty as an American legislator. Mr. Dobbs enjoyed my patronage and the opportunity it gave me to introduce him into public life only to abuse it. He became, I fear, deeply indebted. His extravagance was unlimited, his ambition unbounded, but without, sir, a cash basis. I advanced money to him from time to time upon the little property you so generously extended to him for his services. But it was quickly dissipated. Yet, sir, such is the ingratitude of man that his family lately appealed to me for assistance. I felt it was necessary to be stern, and I refused. I would not for the sake of his family say anything, but I have missed, sir, books from my library. On the day after he left two volumes of patent office reports and Blue book of congress, purchased that day by me at a store on Pennsylvania avenue, were missing—missing! I had, I believe, sir, great difficulty in keeping it from the papers!"

As Mr. Wiles had heard the story already from Gashwiler's acquaintances, with more or less free comment on the gifted legislator's economy, he could not help thinking that the difficulty had been great indeed. But he only fixed his malevolent eye on Gashwiler and said:

"So he is gone, eh?"

"Yes."

"And you've made an enemy of him? That's bad."

Mr. Gashwiler tried to look dignifiedly unconcerned; but something in his visitor's manner made him uneasy.

"I say it is bad, if you have. Listen. Before I left here, I found at a boarding house where he had boarded, and still owed a bill, a trunk which the landlord retained. Opening it, I found some letters and papers of yours,

with certain memoranda of his, which I thought ought to be in your possession. As an alleged friend of his, I retook the trunk by paying the amount of his bill, and secured the more valuable papers."

Gashwiler, whose face had grown apoplectically suffused as Wiles went on, at last gasped: "But you got the trunk, and have the papers?"

"Unfortunately, no, and that's why it's bad."

"But, good God! what have you done with them?"

"I've lost them somewhere on the Overland road."

Mr. Gashwiler sat for a few moments speechless, vacillating between a purple rage and a pallid fear. Then he said hoarsely:

"They are all blank forgeries—every one of them."

"Oh, no!" said Wiles, smiling blandly on his dexter side, and enjoying the whole scene malevolently with his sinister eye. "Your papers are all genuine, and I won't say are not all right, but unfortunately I had in the same bag some memoranda of my own for the use of my client, that, you understand, might be put to some bad use if found by a clever man."

The two rascals looked at each other. There is on the whole really very little honor among thieves—at least great care—and the inferior rascal succumbed at the reflection of what he might do if he were in the other rascal's place. "See here, Wiles," he said, relaxing his dignity with the perspiration that oozed from every pore, and made the collar of his shirt a mere limp rag. "See here, we"—this first use of the plural was equivalent to a confession—"we must get them papers."

"Of course," said Wiles coolly, "if we can, and if Thatcher doesn't get wind of them."

"He cannot."

"He was on the coach when I lost them, coming east."

Mr. Gashwiler peled again. In the emergency he had recourse to the sideboard and a bottle, forgetting Wiles. Ten minutes before Wiles would have remained seated; but it is recorded that he rose, took the bottle from the gifted Gashwiler's fingers, helped himself first, and then sat down.

"Yes, but, my boy," said Gashwiler, now rapidly changing situations with the cooler Wiles; "yes, but, old fellow," he added, poking Wiles with a fat forefinger, "don't you see the whole thing will be up before he gets here."

"Yes," said Wiles gloomily, "but those lazy, easy, honest men have a way of popping up just at the nick of time. They never need hurry; all things wait for them. Why, don't you remember that on the very day Mrs. Hopkinson and I and you got the president to sign that patent, that very day one of them d— fellows turns up from San Francisco or Australia, having taken his own time to get here—gets here about half an hour after the president had signed the patent, and sent it over to the office, finds the right man to introduce him to the president, has a talk with him, makes him sign an order countermanding its issuance, and undoes all that has been done in six years in one hour."

"Yes, but congress is a tribunal that does not revoke its decrees," said Gashwiler with a return of his old manner; "at least," he added, observing an incredulous shrug in the shoulder of his companion, "at least during the session."

"We shall see," said Wiles, quietly taking his hat.

"We shall see, sir," said the member from Remus with dignity.

CHAPTER XIV WHAT CULTURE DID FOR IT



A SENATOR.

HERE was at this time in the senate of the United States an eminent and respected gentleman, scholarly, orderly, honorable, and radical—the fit representative of a scholarly, orderly, honorable and radical commonwealth. For many years he had held his trust with conscious rectitude, and a slight deprecation of other forms of merit; and for as many years had been as regularly returned to his seat by his constituency with equally conscious rectitude in themselves and an equal skepticism regarding others. Removed by his nature beyond the reach of certain temptations, and by circumstances beyond even the knowledge of others, his social and political integrity was spotless. An orator and practical politician, his official tasks kept him from idleness, and the public recognition of the complete usefulness of his motives and the magnitude of his designs protected him from enmity. His principles had never been appealed to by a bribe; he had rarely been approached by an emotion.

A man of polished taste in art and literature, and possessing the means to gratify it, his luxurious home was filled with treasures he had himself collected and further enhanced by the stamp of his appreciation. His library had not only the elegance of adornment that his wealth could bring and his taste approve, but a certain refined negligence of habitual use and the easy disorder of the artist's workshop. All this was quickly noted by a young girl who stood on its threshold at the close of a dull January day.

The coat that had been brought to the senator bore the name of "Gerron de Haro," and modestly in the right hand corner, in almost microscopic script, the further description of herself as "Artist." Perhaps the picturesque of the name and its historic suggestion caught the scholar's taste, for when to his request, through his servant, that she would be kind enough to state her business, she replied as frankly that her business was personal to himself, he directed that she should be admitted. Then intruding herself behind his library table, overlooking a basket of books and a glacial of pamphlets and papers, and throwing into his forehead and eyes an expression of utter disqualification for any-

(To be Continued.)



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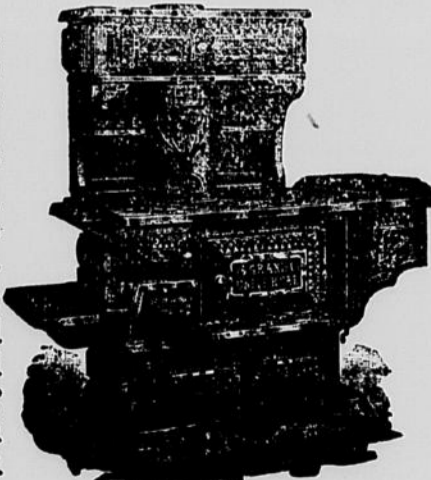
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