STOW BOTHIN AT THE IT'S

BY BRET HARTE

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straing them a little above the social level of seir entertainers. For even with all their sposition to the strangers, Kate and Hale had always retained a conscious itude of gentle condescension and superiwity toward them-an attitude not inconat with a stronger feeling, nor altogether improvocative of it; yet this evaning they and themselves impressed with something we than an equality in the men who had med and interested them, and they were r own power. Mrs. Hale's little girl, who and appreciated only the seriousness of the nation, had made her own application of "Are you dow'in' away from Aunt Kate d mamma?" she asked, in an interval of

How else can I get you the red snow we wat sunset the other day on the peak you ber said Lee, gayly. "I'll have to get up se morning very early and catch it when

"What is this wonderful snow, Minnie, that you are tormenting Mr. Lee for?" asked Mrs.

"Oh! it's a fairy snow that he told me all at; it only comes when the sun comes up goes down, and if you catch ever so little of it in your hand it makes all you fink you nt come true! Wouldn't that be nice?" But to the child's astonishment her little circle of auditors, even while 'assenting,

The red snow was there plain enough the mext morning before the valley was warm with light, and while Minnie, her mother and aunt Kate were still peacefully sleeping. And Mr. Lee had kept his word and was evidently seeking it, for he and Falkner were already urging their horses through the pass, with their faces toward and lit up by its glow.

CHAPTER VIII.

Kate was stirring early, but not as early as her sister, who met her on the threshold of her room. Her face was quite pale, and sho held a letter in her hand. "What does this mean. Katem

"What is, the matter?" asked Kate, her own color fading from her cheek.

"They are gone-with their horses. Left before day, and left this."

She handed Kate an open letter. The girl took it hurriedly, and read:

"When you get this we shall be no more perhaps not even as much. Ned found the trail yesterday, and we are taking the first advantage of it before day. We dared not trust ourselves to say 'Good-by!' last evening; we were too cowardly to face you this g; we must go as we came, with warning, but not without regret. We leave a package and a letter for your husband. It s not only our poor return for your gentleness and hospitality, but, since it was accidentally the means of giving us the pleasure of your society, we beg you to keep it in safety until his return. We kiss your mother's hands. Ned wants to say something more, but time presses, and I only allow him to send his love to Minnie, and to tell her that he is trying to find the red snow.

"GEORGE T.PP" "But he is not fit to travel," said Mrs Hale. "And the trail-it may not be pass

"It was passable the day before yesterday," mid Kate drearily, "for I discovered it, and went as far as the buck-eyes."

"Then it was you who told them about it," said Mrs. Hale reproachfully.

"No," said Kate indignantly. "Of course I didn't." She stopped, and reading the sigmificance of her speech in the glistening eyes of her sister, she blushed. Josephine kissed her and said:

"It was treating us like children, Kate, but we must make them pay for it hereafter. For that package and letter to John means something, and we shall probably see them before long. I wonder what the letter is about, and what is in the package?"

Probably one of Mr. Lee's jokes. He is quite capable of turning the whole thing into ridicule. I dare say he considers his visit here a prolonged jest,"

"With his poor leg, Kate! You are as unfair to him as you were to Falkner when they first came."

Kate, however, kept her dark eyebrows knitted in a piquent frown.

"To think of his intimating what he would allow Falkner to say! And yet you believe he has no evil influence over the young

Mrs. Hale laughed. "Where are you going so fast, Katel" she called, mischievously, as the young lady flounced out of the room. ere! Why, to tidy John's room. He

may be coming at any moment now. Or do you want to do it yourself!" "No, no," returned Mrs. Hale, hurriedly,

you do it. I'll look in a little later on." She turned away with a sigh. The st was chining brilliantly outside. Throng

half-open blinds its long shafts so to be searching the house for the lost gue and making the hollow shell appear do y. What a contrast to the ys of mysterious seclusion and delicion ity, lit by Lee's laughter and the spark th, which had po and so quickly!

ed interminable and i on, while they were deep in a conference with Mrs. Scott, who mailing salts or jally, then, when they were

se. "The women loosed

"They have returned," said Mrs. Hale.

Kate ran to the window. A horsoman was approaching the house. A single clance showed her that it was neither Falkner, Lee nor Hale, but a stranger,

"Perhaps he brings some news of th said Mrs. Scott, quickly. So complete bad been their preoccupation with the loss of their guests that they could not yet conceive of anything that did not pertain to it.

The stranger, who was at once ushered into the parlor, was evidently disconcerted by the ce of the three women

"I reckoned to see John Hale yer," he began,

A slight look of disappointment passed over their faces. "He has not yet returned," said Mrs. Hale briefly.

"Sho! I wanter know. He's hed time do it. I reckon." said the stranger.

"I suppose he hasn't been able to get ever from the Summit," returned Mrs. Hale. "The trail is closed "

"It ain't now, for I kem over it this morn You didn't "You didn't meet any one?" saked Mrs. Hale timidly, with a glance at the

A long silence ensued. The unfort

visitor plainly perceived an evident abatement of interest in himself, yet he still struggled politely to say something. "Then I reckon you know what kept Hais away!" he said dubiously.

"Oh, certainly—the stage robbery." "I wish I'd known that," said the stranger reflectively, "for I ex good ex rode over jist to tell it to ye. Ye see, John Hale, he sent a note to ye 'splainin' matters by a gentleman; but the road agents tackled that man, and left him for dead in the road."

"Yes." said Mrs. Hale impatiently. "Luckily he didn't die, but kem to and managed to crawl inter the bush, whar I found him when I was lookin' for stock, and brought him to my house"

"You found him? Your house!" interrupted Mrs. Hale.

"Inter my house," continued the man doggedly. "I'm Thompson of Thompson's Pass over you; mebbe it ain't much of a house, but I brought him thar. Well, ez he couldn't find the note that Hale had guy him, and like ez not the road agents had gone through him and got it, ez soon ez the weather let up I made a break over yer to tell ye."

"You say Mr. Lee came to your-house," repeated Mrs. Hale, "and is there now!"

"Not much," said the man grimly; "and I never said Lee was thar. I mean that Bilson was shot by Lee and kem"-

"Certainly, Josephine!" said Kate, suddenly stepping between her sister and Thompso and turning upon her a white face and ever of silencing significance; "certainly—don't you remember?-that's the story we got from the Chinaman, you know, only muddled. Go on, sir," she continued, turning to Thompson calmly; "you say that the man who brought the note from my brother was shot by Lee?"

"And another fellow they call Falkner. Yes, that's about the size of it."

Thank you: it's nearly the same story that we heard. But you have had a long ride, Mr. Thompson; let me offer you a glass of whisky in the dining room. This way,

The door closed upon them none too soon. For Mrs. Hale already felt the room whirling around her and sank back into her chair with an hysterical laugh. Old Mrs. Scott did not move from her seat, but, with her eyes fixed on the door, impatiently waited Kate's return. Neither spoke, but each felt that the young, untried girl was equal to the emergency and would get at the truth.

The sound of Thompson's feet in the hall and the closing of the front door was followed by Kate's reappearance. Her face was still pale, but calm.

"Well?" said the two women in a breath.

"Well," returned Kate, slowly, "Mr. Lee and Mr. Falkner were undoubtedly the two ment who took the paper from Johu's messenger and brought it here.

"You are sure!" said Mrs. Scott. "There can be no mistake, mother."

"Then," said Mrs. Scott, with triumphant feminine logic, "I don't want anything more to satisfy me that they are perfectly innocent!"

More convincing than the most perfect masculine deduction, this single expression of their common nature sent a thrill of sympathy and understanding through each. They cried for a few moments on each other's

"To think," said Mrs. Scott, "what that poor boy must have suffered to have been obliged to do-that to-to-Bilson-isn't that the creature's name? I suppose we ought to send over there and inquire after him, with some chicken and jelly, Kate. It's only comnon humanity, and we must be just, my dear; for even if he shot Mr. Lee and provoked the poor boy to shoot him, he may have thought it his duty. And, then, it will

avert so cions." "To think," murmured Mrs. Hale, "what they must have gone through while they were here—momentarily expecting John to come, and yet keeping up such a light heart."

"I believe, if they had stayed any longer, they would have told us everything," said

Both the younger women were slient. Kate was thinking of Falkner's significant speech as they neared the house on their last walk; phine was recalling the remorseful pic ture drawn by Lee, which she kn

own portrait. Suddenly she started.
"But John will be here soon; what are to tell him! And then that package and that

sent, my child," said Mrs. Scott gently. unfortunate this Mr. Thompson called here, but we are not obliged to understand what he says now about John's message, or oct our visitors with his story.

tly as we did if they had come without any ge from John; so I do not know wh we should lay any stress on that, or ever speak of it. The simple fact is that we have opened our house to two strangers in distress Your husband," continued Mr. Hale's mother-in-law, "does not require to know more. As to the letter and package, we will keep that for further consideration. It can not be of much importance or they would have spoken of it before; it is probably some trifling present as a return for your hospital ity. I should use no indecorous haste in having it opened."

The two women kissed Mrs. Scott with a feeling of relief, and fell back into the monotony of their household duties. It is to be feared, however, that the absence of their outlawed guests was nearly as dangerous as their presence in the opportunity it afforded for uninterrupted and imaginative reflection. Both Kate and Josephine were at first shocked and wounded by the discovery of the real character of the two men with whom they had associated so familiarly, but it was no disparagement to their sense of propriety to say that the shock did not last long, and was accompanied with the fascination of dan-ger. This was succeeded by a consciousness of the delicate flattery implied in their indirect influence over the men who had undoubtedly risked their lives for the sake of remaining with them. The best woman is not above being touched by the effect of her power over the worst man, and Kate at first allowed herself to think of Falkner in that light. But if in her later reflections he sur as a heroic experience to be forgotten, he gained something as an actual man to be remembered. Now that the proposed rides from "his friend's house" were a part of the illusion, would he ever dare to visit them again? Would she dare to see him? She held her breath with a sudden pain of parting that was new to her; she tried to think of some thing else, to pick up the scattered threads of ber life before that eventful day. But in vain: that one week had filled the place with implacable memories, or more terrible, as it semed to her and her sister, they had both lost their feeble, alien hold upon Eagle's Court in the sudden presence of the real genii of these solitudes, and henceforth they alone would be strangers there. They scarcely dared to confess it to each other, but this return to the dazzling sunlight and cloudless skies of the past appeared to them to be one unreal experience; they had never known the true wild flavor of their home except in that week of delicious isolation. Without breathing it aloud, they longed for some vague denouement to this experience that should take them from Eagle's Court forever.

It was noon the next day when the little household beheld the last shred of their illusion vanish like the melting snow in the strong sunlight of John Hale's return. He was accompanied by Col. Clinch and Rawlins, two strangers to the women. Was it fancy or the avenging spirit of their absent companions? But he, too, looked a stranger, and as the little cavalcade wound its way up the slope he appeared to sit his horse and wear his hat with a certain slouch and absence of his usual restraint that strangely shocked them. Even the old half-condescend ing, half-punctilious gallantry of his greeting of his wife and family was changed, as he introduced his companions with a mingling of familiarity and shyness that was new to him. Did Mrs. Hale regret it, or feel a sense of relief in the absence of his usual seignorial formality? She only knew that she was grateful for the presence of the strangers. which for the moment postponed a matrimo nial confidence from which she shrunk.

"Proud to know you," said Col. Clinch with a sudden outbreak of the antique gallantry of some remote Huguenot ancestor. "My friend, Judge Hale, must be a regula Roman citizen to leave such a family and such a house at the call of public duty. Eh. Rawlins?"



"Proud to know you," said Col. Clinch.

"You bet." said Rawlins, looking from Kate to her sister in undisguised admiration "And I suppose the duty could not have en a very pleasant one," said Mrs. Hale timidly, with ut looking at her husband.

"Gad, madam, that's just it," said the gal-ant Colonal, seating himself with a comfort able air, and an easy, though by no n tful familiarity. "We went inte this fight a little more than a week ago. The only scrimmage we've had has been with the tives that were on the robbers' track Ha! ha! The best people we've met have been the friends of the men we were huntin', and we've generally come to the conclusion to vote the other ticket! Es Judge Hale and me agreed or we came along, the two men es we'd most like to see just now and shake hands with are George Lee and Ned Falk-

"The two leaders of the party who robbed the coach," explained Mr. Hale, with a slight return of his usual precision of state-

blam of thankugiving in their grateful eyes. Fithout comprehending all that Col. Clinch ad said, they understood enough to know a blam of thank

pursuit of that party, and that their own conduct was spared criticism. I hardly dare write it, but they instantly assumed the appearance of aggrieved martyrs, and felt as if they were!

"Yes, ladies!" continued the colonel, inspired by the bright eyes fixed upon him. "We haven't taken the road ourselves yet, but the polythese we wouldn't mind doing it in

-pohr honor-we wouldn't mind doing it in a case like this." Then with the fluent but somewhat exaggerated phraseology of a man somewhat exaggerated phraseology of a man-trained to "stump" speaking, he gave an account of the robbery and his own con-nection with it. He spoke of the swindling and treachery which had undoubtedly pro-voked Falkner to obtain restitution of his property by an overt act of violence under the leadership of Lee. He added that he had learned since at Wild Cat Station that Harkins had fied the country, that a suit had been commenced by the Excelsion Dick been commenced by the Excelsion Direk company, and that all available property of Harkins had been esized by the sheriff.

Harkins had been existed by the sheriff.

"Of course it can't be proved yet, but there's no doubt in my mind that Lee, who is an old friend of Ned Falkner's, got up that job to help him, and that Ned's off with the money by this time—and I'm right glad of it. I can't say ex we've done much toward it, except to keep tumbling in the way of that detective party of Stanner's, and so throw them off the trail—ha, ha! The judge hem. I recken has had his share of fun. for here, I reckon, has had his share of fun, for while he was at 'Hennicker's trying to get some facts from Hennicker's pretty daughter, Stanner tried to get up some sort of vigilance committee of the stage passengers to burn down Hennicker's ranch out of spite, but the

judge here stepped in and stopped that."

"It was really a highhanded proceeding,
Josephine, but I managed to the control of t Hale, meeting somewhat consciously the first direct look his wife had cast upon him, and falling back for support on his old manner. 'In its way, I think it was worse than the robbery by Lee and Falkner, for it was done in the name of law and order; while, as far as I can judge from the facts, the affair that we were following up was simply a ruce and irregular restitution of property that had been morally stolen."

"I have no doubt you did quite right, though I don't understand it," said Mrs. Hale, languidly; "but I trust these gentlemen will stay to luncheon, and in the meantime excuse us for runnning away, as we are short of servants, and Manuel seems to have followed the example of the head of the house and left us, in pursuit of somebody or something.

When the three women had gained the vantage ground of the drawing room, Kate said, earnestly, "As it's all right, hadn't we better tell him now?"

"Decidedly not, child," said Mrs. Scott, im-peratively. "Do you suppose they are in a hurry to tell us their whole story! Who are those Hennicker people? and they were there a week ago!"

"And did you notice John's bat when he came in, and the vulgar familiarity of calling him 'judge?" said Mrs. Hale.

"Well, certainly anything like the familiar-ity of this man Clinch I never saw," said Kate. "Contrast his manner with Mr. Falk-

At luncheon the three suffering martyrs finally succeeded in reducing Hale and his two friends to an attitude of vague apology. But their triumph was short lived. At the e of the meal they were startled by the tramp-ling of hoofs without, followed by loud knocking. In another moment the door was opened and Mr. Stanner strode into the oom. Hale rose with a look of indignation.
"I thought, as Mr. Stanner understood that

I had no desire for his company elsewhere, he would hardly venture to intrude upon me in my house, and certainly not after "Ef you're alluding to the Vigilantes shakin' you and Zeenie up at Hennicker's, you can't make me responsible for that. I'm here now

on business-you understand-reg'lar business. Ef you want to see the papers yer ken. I suppose you know what a warrant is?" know what you are," said Hale hotly.

and if you don't leave my house "Steady, boys," interrupted Stanner, as his five benchmen filed into the ball. no backin' down here, Col. Clinch, unless you and Hale kalkilate to back down the state of Californy! The matter stands like this: There's a halfbreed Mexican, called Manuel, arrested over at the Summit, who swears he saw George Lee and Edward Falkner in this house the night after the robbery. He says that they were makin' themselves at home here, as if they were among friends, and considerin' the kind of help we've had from Mr. John Hale, it looks ez if it might be true.

"It's an infamous lie!" said Hale.
"It may be true, John," said Mrs. Scott. stepping in front of her palecheeked daughters. "A wounded man wa brought here out of the storm by his friend, who claimed the shelter of your roof. As your mother I should have been unworthy to stay beneath it and have denied that shelter or withheld it until I knew his name and what he was. He stayed here until he could be removed. He left a letter for you. It will probably tell you if he was the man this per-

"Thank you, mother," said Hale, lifting her hand to his lips quietly; "and perhaps you will kindly tell these gentleman that, as your son does not care to know who or wh the stranger was, there is no necessity for opening the letter or keeping Mr. Stanner a

But you will oblige me, John, by op ft before these gentlemen," said Mrs. Hale, recovering her voice and color. "Please to follow me," she said, preceding them to the

They entered Mr. Hale's room, now re stored to its original condition. On the table lay a letter and a small package. The eye of Mr. Stanner, a little shashed by the atti-tude of the two women, fastened upon it and

Josephine handed her husband the letter ed it in breathless silence and read: He opened is "John Hale:

"We owe you no return for voluntarily "We own you no return for voluntarily making yourself a champion of justice and pursuing us, except it was to offer you a fair field and no favor. We didn't get that much from you, but accident brought us into your house and into your family, where we did get it and were fairly vanquished. To the victors belong the spoils. We leave the package of greenbacks which we took from Col. Clinch in the Bierra coach, but which was first stolen by Harkins from forty-four shareholders of the Excelsior Ditch. We have no right to say what you should do with it, but if you aren't tired of following the same line of justice that induced you to run after us of justice that induced you to run after us you will try to restore it to its rightful own-

"We leave you another trifle as an evidence

sevice to you, evaluated dental as the introdica. rill fluid a pair of boots in the cor closef. They were taken from the burgleri-ous feet of Manuel, your pann, who, believ-ing the three ladles were alone and at his mercy, entered your house with an accom-plice at 2 o'clock on the morning of the 21st, and was kicked out by

"Your obedient s

"GEORGE LEE & EDWARD FALKNER." Hale's voice and color changed on reading this last paragraph. He turned quickly toward his wife; Kate flow to the court where the muffled boots of Manuel confronted them. "We never knew it. I always pected something that night," said Mrs. Hale

and Mrs. Scott in the same breath.

"That's all very well and like George Leveligh falutin"," said Stamer, approaching the table, "but as long as the greenbacks are bere be can make what capital he likes outer Manuel. Fil trouble, you to pass over that

package."

"Excuse me," said Hale, "but I believe to the package taken from Col. Clinch, not!" he added, appealing to the colonel.

"It is," said Clinch.

"Then take it," said Hale, handing him ckage. "The first restitution is to you, l I believe you will fulfill Lee's instruc-well as myself."

"But," said Stanner, furlously interpo

"But," said Stanner, ruriously interposing "I've a warrant to select that wherever found and I dare you to disobey the law."

"Mr. Stanner," said Clinch, slowly, "there are ladies present. If you insist upon having that package I must ask them to withdraw and I'm afraid you'll find me better prepare and I'm afraid you'll find me better prepare where then I was the life. to resist a second robbery than I was the first. Your warrant, which was taken out by the express company, is supplanted by civil pro-ceedings taken the day before yesterday. against the property of the fugitive swindler Harkins! You should have consulted the sheriff before you came here."

Stanner saw his mistake. But in the faces of his grinning followers he was obliged to keep up his bluster. "You shall hear from me again, sir," he said, turning on his heel,
"I beg your pardon," said Clinch grimly,
"but do I understand that at last I am to

have the honor"—
"You shall hear from the company's lawyers, sir," said Stanner, turning red, and

noisily leaving the room.
"And so, my dear ladies," said Col. Clinch, you have spent a week with a highwayman. I say a highwayman, for it would be hard to call my young friend Falkner by that name for his first offense, committed under great provocation, and undoubtedly instigated by Lee, who was an old friend of his, and to whom he came, no doubt, in desperation."

Kate stole a triumphant glance at her sis ter, who dropped her lids over her glistening cyes. "And this Mr. Lee," she continue

more gently," is he really a highwayman?"
"George Lee," said Clinch, settling himself back oratorically in his chair, "my dear young lady, is a highwayman, but not of the com-mon sort. He is a gentleman bern, madam, comes from one of the oldest families of the enstern shore of Maryland. He never mixe himself up with anything but some of the He is very popular with ladies and children; he was never known to do or say anything that could bring a blush to the check of beauty or a tear to the eye of innocence. I think I may say I'm sure you found him

"I shall never believe him anything but a

gentlemau," said Mrs. Scott firmly.

"If he has a defect it is perhaps a too reckless indulgence in draw poker," said the colonel musingly; "not unbecoming a gentleman, understand me, Mrs. Scott, but perhaps too reckless for his own good. George played a grand game, a glittering game, but pardon me if I say an 'uncertain' game. I've told

"Then you know him?" said Mrs. Hale. lifting her soft eyes to the colonel. "I have that honor."

"Did his appearance, Josephine," broke in Hale, somewhat ostentatiously, "appear to—er—er—correspond with these qualities?"
You know what I mean."

"He certainly seemed very simple and natural," said Mrs. Hale, slightly drawing her pretty lips together. "He did not wear his trousers rolled up over his boots in the company of ladies, as you're doing now, no did he make his first appearance in this ing, or I should not have admitted him." There were a few moments of embarrassing

"Do you intend to give that package to Mr. Falkner yourself, colonel?" asked Mrs. Scott.

"I shall hand it over to the Excelsion company," said the colonel, "but I shall informated of what I have done," "Then," said Mrs. Scott, "will you kindly

take a message from us to bine?" "If you wish it." "You will be doing me a great favor, colo-

nel," said Hale, politely. Whatever the message was, six months alater it brought Edward Falkner, the reestablished superintendent of the Excelsi Ditch, to Eagle's Court. As he and Kate stood again on the plateau, boking toward

the distant slopes once more green with verdure, Falkmer said: "Everything here looks as 't did the first day I saw it, except your sister.

"The place does not agree with her," said Kate hurriedly. "That is why my brother thinks of leaving it before the winter sets "It seems so sad," said Falkner, "for the is

words poor George said to me, as he left to join his consin's corps at Richmond, we've 'If I'm not killed, Nod, I hope some day to stand again heside Mrs. Hale at the window in Ragio's Court, and watch you and Kate coming home!

THE BNO.

For some time past rumors have been ent in Constantinople of the discovery Asia Minor, and the attention of the govern-ment laving been called to the matter, the report has been proved to have some founda-tion. It seems that an Armenian of the name