

AN HEIRSS OF RED DOG.

BY HERT HARTZ.

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"I did, Mr. Hamlin. I ain't so hard to take as you think, though I might be kinder, I know."

Mr. Hamlin rose, deliberately resumed his coat, watch, hat and overcoat. When he was completely dressed again he turned to Peg.

"Do you mean to say that you've been givin' all the money you made here to this A1 first class cherubim?"

"Yes; but he didn't know where I got it. Oh, Mr. Hamlin! he didn't know that."

"Do I understand you, that he's bin bucking agin' you with the money that you raised on hash? And you makin' the hash?"

"But he didn't know that. He wouldn't know it if I'd told him."

"No, he'd hev died fust!" said Mr. Hamlin gravely. "Why, he's that sensitive—is Jack Folinsbee—that it nearly kills him to take money even of me. But where does this angel reside when he ain't fightin' the tiger, and is, so to speak, visible to the naked eye?"

"He—he—stays here," said Peg, with an awkward blush.

"I see. Might I ask the number of his room—or should I be a—disturbing him in his meditations?" continued Jack Hamlin, with grave politeness.

"Oh! then you'll promise! And you'll talk to him, and make him promise?"

"Of course," said Hamlin quietly.

"And you'll remember he's sick—very sick! His room's No. 44, at the end of the hall. Perhaps I'd better go with you?"

"I'll find it."

"And you won't be too hard on him?"

"I'll be a father to him," said Hamlin demurely, as he opened the door and stepped into the hall. But he hesitated a moment, and then turned and gravely held out his hand. Peg took it timidly. He did not seem quite in earnest; and his black eyes, vainly questioned, indicated nothing. But he shook her hand warmly, and the next moment was gone.

He found the room with no difficulty. A faint cough from within, and a querulous protest, answered his knock. Mr. Hamlin entered without further ceremony. A sickening smell of drugs, a palpable flavor of stale dissipation, and the wasted figure of Jack Folinsbee, half dressed, extended upon the bed, greeted him. Mr. Hamlin was for an instant startled. There were hollow circles round the sick man's eyes; there was gaily in his trembling limbs; there was disquiet in his feverish breath.

"What's up?" he asked huskily and nervously.

"I am, and I want you to get up too."

"I can't, Jack. I'm regularly done up." He reached his shaking hand toward a glass half filled with sparkling, pungent smelling liquid; but Mr. Hamlin stayed it.

"Do you want to get back that \$2,000 you lost?"

"Yes."

"Well, get up, and marry that woman down stairs."

Folinsbee laughed half hysterically, half sardonically.

"She won't give it to me."

"No; but I will."

"You?"

"Yes."

Folinsbee, with an attempt at a reckless laugh, rose, trembling and with difficulty, to his swollen feet. Hamlin eyed him narrowly, and then bade him lie down again. "To-morrow will do," he said, and then—

"If I don't?"

"If you don't," responded Hamlin, "why, I'll just wade in and cut you out!"

But on the morrow Mr. Hamlin was spared that possible act of disloyalty; for, in the night, the already hesitating spirit of Mr. Jack Folinsbee took flight on the wings of the southeast storm. When or how it happened, nobody knew. Whether this last excitement, and the near prospect of matrimony, or whether an overdose of anodynes had hastened his end, was never known. I only know that when they came to awaken him the next morning the best that was left of him—a face still beautiful and boy like—looked up coldly at the fearful eyes of Peg Moffat. "It serves me right, it's a judgment," she said in a low whisper to Jack Hamlin; "for God knew that I'd brokea my word, and willed all my property to him."

She did not long survive him. Whether Mr. Hamlin ever clothed with action the suggestion indicated in his speech to the lamented Jack that night is not of record. He was always her friend, and on her demise became her executor. But the bulk of her property was left to a distant relation of handsome Jack Folinsbee, and so passed out of the control of Red Dog forever.

THE END.

HOW SANTA CLAUS CAME TO SIMPSON'S BAR.

BY HERT HARTZ.

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It had been raining in the valley of the Sacramento. The North Fork had overflowed its banks and Rattlesnake creek was swamping. The few bowlders that had marked the summer ford at Simpson's Crossing were obliterated by a vast sheet of water stretching to the foothills. The up stage was stopped at Grangers; the last mail had been abandoned in the tules, the rider swimming for his life. "An area," remarked The Sierra Avalanche, with pensive local pride, "as large as the state of Massachusetts is now under water."

Nor was the weather any better in the foothills. The mud by deep on the mountain road; wagons that neither physical force nor moral obligation could move from the ways into which they had fallen encumbered the track, and the way to Simpson's Bar was indicated by broken down teams and hand swearing. And farther on, cut off and inaccessible, rained upon and bedraggled, smitten by high winds and threatened by high water, Simpson's Bar, on the eve of Christmas day, 1863, clung like a swallow's nest to the rocky entablature and splintered capitals of Table mountain, and shook in the blast.

As night shut down on the settlement a few lights gleamed through the mist from the windows of cabins on either side of the highway now crossed and gullied by lawless streams and swept by marauding winds. Happily most of the population were gathered at Thompson's store, clustered around a red hot stove, at which they silently spat in some accepted sense of social communion that, perhaps, rendered conversation unnecessary. Indeed, most methods of diversion had long since been exhausted at Simpson's Bar; high water had suspended the regular occupations on gulch and on river, and a consequent lack of money and whisky had taken the zest from most illegitimate recreation. Even Mr. Hamlin was fain to leave the Bar with \$30 in his pocket—the only amount actually realized of the large sums won by him in the successful exercise of his arduous profession. "Ef I was asked," he remarked somewhat later, "ef I was asked to pint out a purty little village where a retired sport as didn't care for money could exercise hisself, frequent and lively, I'd say Simpson's Bar; but for a young man with a large family depending on his exertions, it don't pay." As Mr. Hamlin's family consisted mainly of female adults, this remark is quoted rather to show the breadth of his humor than the exact extent of his responsibility.

Howbeit, the unconscious objects of this satire sat that evening in the listless apathy begotten of idleness and lack of excitement. Even the sudden splashing of hoots before the door did not arouse them. Dick Bullen alone paused in the act of scraping out his pipe, and lifted his head, but no one of the group indicated any interest in, or recognition of, the man who entered.

It was a figure familiar enough to the company, and known in Simpson's Bar as "The Old Man." A man of perhaps 50 years; grizzled and scant of hair, but still fresh and youthful of complexion. A face full of ready, but not very powerful sympathy, with a chameleon like aptitude for taking on the shade and color of contiguous moods and feelings. He had evidently just left some hilarious companions, and did not at first notice the gravity of the group, but slapped the shoulder of the nearest man jocularly, and threw himself into a vacant chair.

"Just heard the best thing out, boys! Ye know Smiley, over yar—Jim Smiley—funniest man in the Bar! Well, Jim was jest telling the richest yarn about—"

"Smiley's a—fool," interrupted a gloomy voice.

"A particular—akunk," added another in sepulchral accents.

A silence followed these positive statements. The Old Man glanced quickly around the group. Then his face slowly changed. "That's so," he said reflectively, after a pause, "certingly a sort of a skunk and suthin of a fool. In course." He was silent for a moment as in painful contemplation of the unreasoning and folly of the unpopular Smiley. "Dismal weather, ain't it?" he added, now fully embarked on the current of prevailing sentiment. "Mighty rough papers on the boys, and no show for money this season. And to-morrow's Christmas."

There was a movement among the men at this announcement, but whether of satisfaction or disgust was not plain. "Yes," continued the Old Man in the lugubrious tone he had, within the last few moments, unconsciously adopted—"yes, Christmas, and to-night's Christmas eve. Ye see, boys, I kinder thought—that is, I sorter had an idee, jest passin' like, you know—that may be y'd all like to come over to my house to-night and have a sort of tear round. But I suppose, now, you wouldn't! Don't feel like it, maybe?" he added with anxious sympathy, peering into the faces of his companions.

"Well, I don't know," responded Tom Flynn with some cheerfulness. "Pr'aps we may. But how about your wife, Old Man? What does she say to it?"

The Old Man hesitated. His conjugal experience had not been a happy one, and the fact was known to Simpson's Bar. His first wife, a delicate, pretty little woman, had suffered keenly and secretly from the jealous suspicions of her husband, until one day he invited the whole Bar to his house to expose her infidelity. On arriving, the party found the shy, petite creature quietly engaged in her household duties, and retired abashed and discomfited. But the sensitive woman did not easily recover from the extraordinary shock of this outrage. It was with difficulty she regained her equanimity sufficiently to release her lover from the closet in which he was concealed and escape with him. She left a boy of 5 years to comfort her bereaved husband. The Old Man's present wife had been his cook. She was large, loyal and aggressive.

Before he could reply, Joe Dimpick suggested with great directness that it was the "Old Man's house," and that, invoking the divine power, if the case were his own, he would invite whom he pleased, even if in so doing, he imperiled his salvation. The powers of evil, he further remarked, should contend against him vainly. All this delivered with a toughness and vigor lost in this necessary translation.

"In course, Certainly. That's it," said the Old Man with a sympathetic frown. "That's no trouble about that. It's my own house, built every sickle to the yard! Don't you be afraid o' her, boys. She dey out up a trifle tough—ex wimmis do—but she'll come round." Secretly the Old Man trusted to

the exaltation of liquor and the power of courageous example to sustain him in such an emergency.

As yet, Dick Bullen, the oracle and leader of Simpson's Bar, had not spoken. He now took his pipe from his lips. "Old Man, how's that yer Johnny gettin' on? Seems to me he didn't look so port last time I seed him on the bluff, heavin' rocks at Chinamen. Didn't seem to take much interest in it. That was a gang of 'em by yar yesterday—drowned out up the river—and I kinder thought o' Johnny, and how he'd miss 'em! Maybe now, we'd be in the way of he was sick?"

The father, evidently touched not only by this pathetic picture of Johnny's deprivation, but by the considerate delicacy of the speaker, hastened to assure him that Johnny was better and that a "little fun might liven him up."

Whereupon Dick arose, shook himself, and saying, "I'm ready. Lead the way, Old Man; here goes," himself led the way with a leap, a characteristic bow, and darted out into the night. As he passed through the outer room he caught up a blazing brand from the hearth. The action was repeated by the rest of the party, closely following and elbowing each other, and before the astonished proprietor of Thompson's grocery was aware of the intention of his guests, the room was deserted.

The night was pitchy dark. In the first gust of wind their temporary torches were extinguished, and only the red brands dancing and fitting in the gloom like drunken will-o'-the-wisps indicated their whereabouts. Their way led up Pine Tree canyon, at the head of which a broad, low, bark thatched cabin burrowed in the mountain side. It was the home of the Old Man, and the entrance to the tunnel in which he worked when he worked at all. Here the crowd paused for a moment, out of delicate deference to their host, who came up panting in the rear.

"Pr'aps y'd better hold on a second out yer, whilst I go in and see that things is all right," said the Old Man, with an indifference he was far from feeling. The suggestion was graciously accepted, the door opened and closed on the host, and the crowd, leaning their backs against the wall and cowering under the caves, waited and listened.

For a few moments there was no sound but the dripping of water from the caves, and the stir and rustle of wrestling boughs above them. Then the men became uneasy, and whispered suggestion and suspicion passed from the one to the other. "Reckon she's caved in her head the first lick!" "Decoyed him inter the tunnel and barred him up, likely." "Got him down and sittin' on him." "Probly bilin suthin to heave on us; stand clear the door, boys!" For just then the latch clicked, the door slowly opened, and a voice said, "Come in out o' the wet."

The voice was neither that of the Old Man nor of his wife. It was the voice of a small boy, its weak treble broken by that preternatural hoarseness which only vagabondage and the habit of premature self assertion can give. It was the face of a small boy that looked up at theirs—a face that might have been pretty and even refined but that it was darkened by evil knowledge from within and dirt and hard experience from without. He had a blanket around his shoulders and had evidently just risen from his bed. "Come in," he repeated, "and don't make no noise. The Old Man's in there talking to mar," he continued, pointing to an adjacent room which seemed to be a kitchen, from which the Old Man's voice came in deprecating accents. "Let me be," he added, querulously, to Dick Bullen, who had caught him up, blanket and all, and was affecting to toss him into the fire, "let go o' me, you d—d old fool, d'ye yo hear?"

Thus adjured, Dick Bullen lowered Johnny to the ground with a smothered laugh, while the men, entering quietly, ranged themselves around a long table of rough boards which occupied the center of the room. Johnny then gravely proceeded to a cupboard and brought out several articles which he deposited on the table. "That's whisky. And crackers. And red herons. And cheese." He took a bite of the latter on his way to the table. "And sugar." He scooped up a mouthful en route with a small and very dirty hand. "And terbaeker. That's dried appils, too, on the shelf, but I don't admire 'em. Appils is swellin'. That," he concluded, "now wade in, and don't be afraid. I don't mind the old woman. She don't b'long to me. S'long."

He had stepped to the threshold of a small room, scarcely larger than a closet, and hounding in its dim recess a small bed. He stood there a moment looking at the company, his bare feet peeping from the blanket, and nodded.

"Hello, Johnny! You ain't goin' to turn in agin, are ye?" said Dick.

"Yes, I are," responded Johnny, decidedly.

"Why, wot's up, old fellow?"

"I'm sick."

"How sick?"

"I've got a fever. And chillsains. And roomatis," returned Johnny, and vanished within. After a moment's pause he added in the dark, apparently from under the bed clothes, "And bites."

There was an embarrassing silence. The men looked at each other, and at the fire. Even with the appetizing banquet before them it seemed as if they might again fall into the dependency of Thompson's grocery, when the voice of the Old Man, incautiously lifted, came depressingly from the kitchen: "Certainly! That's so. In course they is. A gang o' lazy, drunken loafers, and that ar Dick Bullen's the swarrest of all. Didn't hev no more sibe than to come round yar with sickness in the house and no provision. That's what I said. 'Bullen, sez I, it's crazy drunk you are, or a fool, sez I. To think o'



DICK BULLEN.

such a thing." "Staples, I see, be you a man, Staples, and 'spect to raise h—l under my roof, and invalids lyin' round? But they would come—they would. That's wot you must 'spect o' such trash as lays round the Bar."

A burst of laughter from the men followed this unfortunate exposure. Whether it was overheard in the kitchen, or whether the Old Man's irate companion had just then exhausted all other modes of expressing her contemptuous indignation I cannot say, but a back door was suddenly slammed with great violence. A moment later, and the Old Man reappeared, happily unconscious of the cause of the late hilarious outburst, and smiled blandly.

"The old woman thought she'd jest run over to Mrs. McFadden's for a sociable call," he explained, with jaunty indifference, as he took a seat at the board.

Oddly enough, it needed this untoward incident to relieve the embarrassment that was beginning to be felt by the party, and their natural audacity returned with their host. I do not propose to record the convivialities of that evening. The inquisitive reader will accept the statement that the conversation was characterized by the same intellectual exaltation, the same cautious reverence, the same fastidious delicacy, the same rhetorical precision and the same logical and coherent discourse somewhat later in the evening which distinguish similar gatherings of the masculine sex in more civilized localities and under more favorable auspices. No glasses were broken, in the absence of any; no liquor was uselessly spilt on floor or table, in the scarcity of that article.

It was nearly midnight when the festivities were interrupted. "Hush," said Dick Bullen, holding up his hand. It was the querulous voice of Johnny from his adjacent closet: "O, dad!"

The Old Man arose hurriedly and disappeared in the closet. Presently he reappeared. "His rheumatiz is coming on agin bad," he explained, "and he wants rubbin'." He lifted the demijohn of whisky from the table and shook it. It was empty. Dick Bullen put down his tin cup with an embarrassed laugh. So did the others. The Old Man examined their contents and said, hopefully: "I reckon that's enough; he don't need much. You hold on all o' you for a spell, and I'll be back;" and vanished in the closet with an old flannel shirt and the whisky. The door closed but imperfectly, and the following dialogue was distinctly audible:

"Now, sonny, whar does she ache worst?"

"Sometimes over yer and sometimes under yer; but it's most powerful from yer to yer. Rub yer, dad."

A silence seemed to indicate a brisk rubbing. Then Johnny:

"Hevin' a good time out yer, dad?"

"Yes, sonny."

"To-morrer's Christmas, aut it?"

"Yes, sonny. How does she feel now?"

"Better. Rub a little furler down. Wot's Christmas, anyway? Wot's it all about?"

"O, it's a day."

This exhaustive definition was apparently satisfactory, for there was a silent interval of rubbing. Presently Johnny again:

"Mar sez that everybody else but yer everybody gives things to everybody Christmas, and then she jest waded inter you. She says that's a man they call Sandy Claws, not a white man, you know, but a kind o' Chinamen, comes down the chimney night afore Christmas and gives things to chillern—boys like me. Puts 'em in their bates. That's what she tried to play upon me. Easy now, pop, whar are you rubbin' to?—that's a mile from the place. She jest made that up, didn't she, jest to aggravate me and you? Don't rub thar. * * * Why, dad?"



That's a man they call Sandy Claws.

In the great quiet that seemed to have fallen upon the house the sigh of the near pines and the drip of leaves without was very distinct. Johnny's voice, too, was lowered as he went on, "Don't you take on now, fur I'm gettin' all right fast. Wot's the boys doin' out thar?"

The Old Man partly opened the door and peered through. His guests were sitting there sociably enough, and there were a few silver coins and a lean buckskin purse on the table. "Bettin' on suthin—some little game or 'nother. They're all right," he replied to Johnny, and recommenced his rubbing.

"I'd like to take a hand and win some money," said Johnny, reflectively, after a pause.

The Old Man glibly repeated what was evidently a familiar formula, that if Johnny would wait until he struck it rich in the tunnel he'd have lots of money, etc., etc.

"Yes," said Johnny, "but you don't. And whether you strike it or I wot it, it's about the same. It's all luck. But it's mighty cur'ous about Christmas—ain't it? Why do they call it Christmas?"

Perhaps from some instinctive deference to the overbearing of his guests, or from some vague sense of ingratitude, the Old Man's reply was so low as to be scarcely beyond the room.

"Yes," said Johnny, with some slight abatement of interest, "I've heard o' 'Aim before. Thar, that'll do, dad! I don't ache near so bad as I did. Now wrap me tight in this yer blanket. Ba. Now," he added in a muffled whisper, "sit down yer by me till I go asleep. To assure himself of obedience, he disengaged one hand from the blanket, and, grasping his

father's sleeve, again composed himself to rest.

For some moments the Old Man waited patiently. Then the untoward stillness of the house excited his curiosity, and, without moving from the bed, he cautiously opened the door with his disengaged hand, and looked into the main room. To his infinite surprise it was dark and deserted. But even then a smoldering log on the hearth broke, and by the upspringing blaze he saw the figure of Dick Bullen sitting by the dying embers.

"Hello!"

Dick started, rose, and came somewhat unsteadily toward him.

"Whar's the boys?" said the Old Man.

"Gone up the canyon on a little posser. They're coming back for me in a minute. I'm waitin' round for 'em. Whar are you starin' at, Old Man?" he added with a forced laugh: "do you think I'm drunk?"

The Old Man might have been pardoned the supposition, for Dick's eyes were humid and his face flushed. He loitered and lounged back to the chimney, yawned, shook himself, buttoned up his coat and laughed. "Liquor ain't so plenty as that, Old Man. Now don't you git up," he continued, as the Old Man made a movement to release his sleeve from Johnny's hand. "Don't you mind manners. Sit jest where you be; I'm goin' in a jiffy. Thar, that's them now."

There was a low tap at the door. Dick Bullen opened it quickly, nodded "Good night" to his host, and disappeared. The Old Man would have followed him but for the hand that still unconsciously grasped his sleeve. He could have easily disengaged it, it was small, weak and emaciated. But perhaps because it was so small, weak and emaciated he changed his mind, and, drawing his chair closer to the bed, rested his head upon it. In this defenseless attitude the potency of his earlier potions surprised him. The room flickered and faded before his eyes, reappeared, faded again, went out, and left him—asleep.

Meantime Dick Bullen, closing the door, confronted his companions. "Are you ready?" said Staples. "Ready," said Dick; "what's the time?" "Past 12," was the reply; "can you make it—it's nigh on fifty miles, the round trip hither and yon." "I reckon," returned Dick, shortly. "Whar's the mare?" "Bill and Jack's holdin' her at the crossin'." "Let 'em hold on a minute longer," said Dick.

He turned and re-entered the house softly. By the light of the guttering candle and dying fire he saw that the door of the little room was open. He stepped toward it on tiptoe and looked in. The Old Man had fallen back in his chair, snoring, his helpless feet thrust out in a line with his collapsed shoulders, and his hat pulled down over his eyes. Beside him, on a narrow wooden bedstead, lay Johnny, muffled tightly in a blanket that hid all save a strip of forehead and a few curls damp with perspiration. Bullen made a step forward, hesitated, and glanced over his shoulder into the deserted room. Everything was quiet. With a sudden resolution he parted his huge mustaches with both hands and stooped over the sleeping boy. But even as he did so a mischievous blast, lying in wait, swooped down the chimney, rekindled the hearth, and lit up the room with a shameless glow from which Dick fled in bashful terror.

His companions were already waiting for him at the crossing. Two of them were struggling in the darkness with some strange misshapen bulk, which as Dick came nearer took the semblance of a great yellow horse.

It was the mare. She was not a pretty picture. From her Roman nose to her rising haunches, from her arched spine, hidden by the stiff machillas of a Mexican saddle, to her thick, straight, bony legs, there was not a line of equine grace. In her half blind but wholly vicious white eyes, in her protruding under lip, in her monstrous color, there was nothing but ugliness and vice.

"Now, then," said Staples, "stand clear o' her heels, boys, and up with you. Don't miss your first bolt of her mane, and mind ye get your off stirrup quick. Ready!"

There was a leap, a scrambling struggle, a bound, a wild retreat of the crowd, a circle of flying hoots, two springlike leaps that jarred the earth, a rapid play and jingle of spurs, a plunge, and then the voice of Dick somewhere in the darkness, "All right!"

"Don't take the lower road back unless you're hard pushed for time! Don't hold her in down hill! We'll be at the ford at 5. Glang! Hoop! Maul! Go!"

A splash, a spark struck from the ledge in the road, a clatter in the rocky cut beyond, and Dick was gone.

Sing, O Muse, the ride of Richard Bullen! Sing, O Muse, of chivalrous men! the sacred quest, the doughty deeds, the battery of low chairs, the fearsome ride and gruesome perils of the tower of Simpson's Bar! Alack! she is dainty, this Muse! She will have none of this bucking brats and swaggering, ragged rider, and I must fain follow him in prosa, afoot!

It was 1 o'clock, and yet he had only gained Rattlesnake hill. For in that time Jovita had rehearsed to him all her imperfections and practiced all her vices. Thrice had she stambled. Twice had she thrown up her Roman nose in a straight line with the reins, and, resisting bit and spur, struck out madly across country. Twice had she reared, and rearing, fallen backward; and twice had she, with Dick's hand, regained her feet before she found her vicious legs again. And a mile beyond there, at the foot of a long hill, was Rattlesnake creek. Dick knew that here was the crucial test of his ability to perform his enterprise, set his teeth grimly, put his knees well into her flanks, and changed his defensive tactics to brisk aggression. Bullen and maddened, Jovita began the descent of the hill. Here the artful Richard pretended to hold her in with occasional cautions.

[To be continued.]