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The Old Shoebox Buggy

(Concluded from page 9.)

come down—and to-morrow all left of it would be a timothy meadow with streaks of sawdust.

What did I care? Revenge was all I wanted now; not on Maggie, but on the youth who had so hypnotized her by just being audacious.

A few miles out past the last sound of the circus where the rigs began to drizzle off into the concession lines and the dust was just thick enough to rise easily and not so thick as to make hard going, I slowed up. About forty rigs went by. Bob at first gingered up at this. But he soon sobered down to see what I intended to do.

Presently—then about seven miles from town—I gazed back at a rig that was coming along smarter than most. I could see its top. And the top was up.

That I surmised was Dave Becket's rig.

Bob surmised as much when I turned again.

Just jogging along when up came the top rig and it turned out to pass. Bob saw that and let himself out a tuck of two. The other horse did the same. Bob let out another tuck. And the race was on.

"Git off the road," bawled Dave. "Room enough for two," says I. "Why don't you go by?"

Down went the top to let the wind slide over.

"Dave," screamed Maggie. "Don't let him—"

Dave emitted a yell. That sent his horse into a lope. The dust was now flying in a cloud and the telegraph poles were going to the rear at a terrible clip. Dave had no idea he couldn't get past that old shoebox buggy weighing half as much again as his top rig. So he kept at it—till I finally gave Bob his last stretch and that settled it. The top rig slowed up. So did I.

"Say, Mr. Ben Hur," I remarked in the quiet of the midnight, "you don't seem to go by very fast."

He made no reply and let his horse dawdle a bit. I knew what he would do—turn up the next concession to avoid me, and he did. I turned old Bob and trailed them up the same concession. That began miles of curious jog-trotting and sometimes walking, when we got into narrow bush roads with only one track. They knew I was not far behind. No doubt he had his left arm round Maggie all the while and very likely kissed her a number of times in the dark canyons of those bush roads.

When we got out of that section of bush roads into another old settlement where the roads were better I saw that there wasn't a house or a school-house or a church or any sort of place that I seemed to have seen before.

Much to my surprise Dave and Maggie begin to slack up. Presently at a cross-roads they stopped. There wasn't a rig on the road. All the houses were dark. I could hear Maggie arguing vehemently with Dave, and him making scornful replies, and the horse pawing the dust.

"Say," I made bold to suggest from the rear, "don't you people think you're lost?"

No reply.

"All right," says I as cheerfully as possible. "So be I. But allow me to throw out a hint Miss Malone"—as I drove up alongside and stopped.

I knew that any other time and place Dave would have fetched old Bob a slash with his whip.

"This horse I'm driving," says I. "Knows all these roads in his sleep. All you have to do is to follow this old shoebox buggy and you'll get home."

"Course," I added—quite irresistibly—"if I wanted to be nasty I could lay down the law that the lady come and ride with me in the old shoebox. But that would hurt her feelings and I don't want to do that."

I jogged ahead and let Bob find his way back to the Centre Road from which the folks behind would be able to get their bearings.

Just at what point they made a turn when Bob didn't I don't remember. But I know that for some miles Bob and I were alone; and that when we turned into Cyrus Pincher's lane it must have been about the same time in the morning as Maggie had started out on the morning of Dominion Day, 1881.