

True Victory.

He stood with a foot on the threshold
And a cloud on his boyish face,
While his city comrade urged him
To enter the gorgeous place.

"There's nothing to fear, old fellow!
It isn't a lion's den,
Here waits you a royal welcome
From lips of the bravest men."

'Twas the old, old voice of the tempter
That sought, in the old, old way,
To lure with a lying promise
The innocent test baby.

"You'd think it was Blue Beard's closet
To see how you stare and shrink!
I tell you there's naught to harm you—
It's only a game and a drink."

He heard the words with a shudder—
"It's only a game and a drink."
And his lips made bold to answer,
"But what would my mother think?"

The name that his heart held dearest
Had started a secret spring,
And forth from the wily tempter
He fled like a haunted thing.

Away! till the glare of the city
And its gilded halls of sin
Are shut from his sense and vision,
The shadows of night within.

Away! till his feet have bounded
O'er fields where his childhood trod;
Away! in the name of virtue,
And the strength of his mother's God!

What though he was branded "coward"
In the blazoned halls of vice,
And banned by the baffled tempter,
Who sullenly tossed the dice.

On the page where the angel keepeth
The records of deeds well done,
That night was the story written
Of a glorious battle won.

And he stood by his home in the starlight—
All guiltless of sword and shield—
A braver and nobler victor
Than the hero of bloodiest field.

—New York Observer.

A HUMBLE HERO:

A STORY OF THE PRAIRIES.

BY EDWARD B. HEATON.

THE prairies on the head-waters of the Hundred-and-Two's, in Southern Iowa, are very fertile, even for so fertile a State. In the year of which we write, they were mainly as Nature made them. The blue stem—the most nutritious of prairie grasses—grew thick and rank, and was still fed upon by the dun deer and mighty-antlered elk. It was late spring. The phlox—or wild sweet-william—was in full bloom over all the prairie, except where, here and there, the point of a hill was blue with the cut-leaved violet. As far as the eye could see, earth's lap was checkered with spring-time green and purple and azure.

One unaccustomed to this land, as he should cast his eye over the scene, would be led to conclude that the expanse was treeless. He would see nothing larger than the resin-weed, or, as it is frequently called, the compass-plant, because of its broad leaves being set north and south upon the stalk. But suddenly he would come to where the prairie halted, abutting against a depression not unfrequently of considerable width and depth. Through the midst of this a little stream wound its devious way, generally bordered by a fringe of forest. Sometimes, too, the bluffs, sloping from the prairie to the creek bottom, were covered with a thick growth of hazel and jack-oak. Along the rocks and among the bluffs were many a wild-cat

and many a wolf—the howlings of the latter often making night hideous with savage serenade.

The edge of the prairie next the groves was first settled. Men and women brought up in the tall timber of Ohio and Indiana were afraid of the prairies' wideness, and prophesied they would never be entirely settled. In this their forecast was not what it would have been ten years later.

These natural gardens were not likely to be left unoccupied for any great length of time. "First come, first served," was the squatter's motto. Hence it was, that some half-dozen years before our narrative, scattering cabins might be found along the prairie's verge, handy to the groves. The trails led along the divides, without reference to the cardinal points, and the cabins were generally at right angles with them. Several families, frequently related to one another, squatted together, dividing the timber and contiguous prairie between them.

At the door of one of these cabins, upon a beautiful May afternoon, sat a couple of women, one of whom was evidently a visitor. They were both engaged in knitting, and were manifestly enjoying each other's company. In the yard before them were some young broods of chickens. A couple of little maids, anywhere between nine and thirteen years of age, were busy feeding them. A huge dog lay at the door, his head upon the step, dozing in the sun.

"My Sam," said the visitor, "was over to the timber yesterday after a load of rails. Coming back he came across Roger Clayton, running down the trail, half scared to death. 'What on airth's up, Roger?' said Sam. Roger climbed up on to the rails, and said, out of breath like, 'I was treed by a mad wolf, down in the bottom, and just saved myself!'"

"'Sho!' says Sam. 'Whoever hearn tell of a mad wolf? I never did,' says he.

"Says Roger, says he, 'I don't see why a wolf won't go mad 's well 's a dog. They're the same nater.'

"'Sho, Rog! You're jest scared; that's all the matter with ye. 'Twa'n't no mad wolf.'

"'Well, they was froth hangin' outen both corners of his mouth. His eyes was red, and his upper lip was drawn away from his teeth. His tongue hung out terrible like. I don't scare at no ornery, common wolf. I've killed lots on 'em. But I had nothin' nor an ax to fend myself, so I skinned up a jack-oak, and the beast went on. You'd better keep your eyes peeled, and look out. Watch your dogs, too. He's a big un.'

"Sam wouldn't believe him. He just larked. Roger rode out on to the perrarie, and went on home. Did you ever hear the like, Givena?"

"Deed and in truth I have, Nancy. Squire was reading only t'other night about the wolves in a land called Roosha, and it said they often went mad and bit people. The preacher, too, t'other night, after meeting at our house, said there was a rumour at the settlement up the creek, that there was a mad wolf over on the middle Hundred-n-Two, and they were talking of making a big hunt for it."

"Sure enough! How do you like our new preacher, Givena?"

"He's just the man we all needed. Squire says he puts him a deal in mind of Elder Jimmy Haven, back in Indiana. Just such a voice, 'n' 'bout his size. Squire says he'll do a power o' good in the settlements."

"That's what Sam says, too. Meetin's at our house next time. I'm real glad of it, 'cause—

"'I belong to the band, hallelujah!
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
I belong to the band, hallelujah!'"

The dog at the step rose, and went toward the fence, wagging his tail.

"I declare," said Mrs. Givena, "if there isn't Simple Simon Ulm! He's allers singin' that hymn. I sometimes think he really do belong to the band."

Her name was Givena, Tullis, wife of Squire Tullis, and her visitor was Nancy Tullis, a cousin by marriage. Both of them were ardent members of a pioneer Methodist Church that met, from house to house, once every three weeks.

"It's my opinion Simple Simon 'll be hungry. He 'most allus is. But I allus think of Scripter: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' If Simple Simon isn't one of the least, I don't know who is."

The singer by this time had approached the women. He was a large, roughly-built man, and he carried a bundle tied together with bark. He wore an indigo-coloured suit of homespun. His broad-brimmed straw hat was also home-made, as were the clumsy shoes upon his feet. His face, which was garnished with a thin sprinkle of yellow hair, was plainly that of an imbecile, but yet with an expression of invincible good nature. He was never wont to stay long in a place, rotating between the Ulm and Tullis settlements, making himself useful by doing chores for the good housewives from whom he received hospitality. He was always welcome, and possessed the entire sympathy of both settlements. Mrs. Givena Tullis was one to whom he was partial. He seemed never to become weary of her presence, and would play with her two little girls for hours together.

After a hearty lunch, a chair was set for him, and he sat down, mopping his face with some calico, which he drew forth from a capacious pocket.

"Dreadful hot, Mis' Givena," said he.

"Powerful warm," replied Mrs. Tullis. "How is all the folks?"

"Pretty well. Old Dannel Ulm's got the rheumatiz, 'n' 's as stiff 's a poker, thank ye."

"Do say!" said Mrs. Nancy. "That's what killed my Aunt Sally, back yonder on the Wabash. Sam declared it was the milksick; but Aunt Sally said nothing ailed her, but her bone a-aching. So I allow 'twas only rheumatics."

"Say, Mis' Givena," said Simple Simon, "I have done learned a new hymn. Preacher sung it. Like to hear it?"

"If it's good, yes. Sing it."

The imbecile had naturally a fine voice. He evidently essayed his best. The first notes brought the children, who leaned against his knees. The dog, whose head rested again upon the step, opened his eyes, and lazily wagged his tail. Sang Simple Simon:—

"'I'm a pilgrim, an' I'm a stranger,
I can tarry—I can tarry but a night.'

"It's called the 'White Pilgrim,' Mis' Givena," said he.

"Go on!" said she. "It's just splendid."

"'Deed an' it is!' said Mrs. Nancy. "Sing all of it."

Thus adjured, Simple Simon sung the whole hymn, holding his little audience spell-bound to the last note.

Said Nancy: "I allow you learned that right easy, Simon. It's as good, if not better, than 'I belong to the band.'"

"It sounds better now," said her cousin; "though it may not wear like the other. We'll know in a month or two."

The dog lying at the door rose to his feet, snuffed the air, uttered a low growl, and, with hair erect, ran out to the road, followed by the girls.