

"Maybe you noticed the party a-rilin' her?"

"I took particular notice of the individual. He was a tall man."

"Bout your height, maybe?"

"Yes, and he wore a broad-brimmed slouch hat, something like this one." The imperturbable robber removed his hat and held it towards the other.

"Notice his hair and beard?"

"Sandy."

"Light complected, eh?"

"Bout my color."

The leader turned to his companions and said:

"Boys, I reckon were much obleeged to the stranger."

There was a murmur of assent.

"Reckon we're hot on the trail?"

"You bet."

"Stranger," began the leader, turning once more to his victim, "we're much obleeged to yo fur yer information. The party ye saw ridin' that claybank pacer—that tall, sandy-complected party you say looks so much like present company—stole the mare, and we're—"

"May be he only borrowed the mare," interrupted the robber.

"That's so. I didn't think o' that. But he borrowed her in the night-time from my barn, close to my house, while I was asleep."

"I guess he didn't want to disturb you—some folks are considerate, you know."

"He might 'a waited till mornin'."

"Perhaps he was in a hurry."

"Precisely; an' come to think of it, so are we. I guess we'll have to be on the move ef we calkerlate to ketch up 'ith the hoss-thief."

He picked up the lariat and threw one end over the branch of the oak. The other men took hold of the rope and ranged themselves in a line. The leader adjusted the noose and placed it around the highwayman's neck.

The latter submitted without a shudder. He even smiled, and, as the loop was drawn tight, said:

"Thanks, I forgot to put on my necktie this mornin'."

"Ye don't know how a necktie improves ye," the leader replied.

"O, I'm a dandy in full dress," said the prisoner. "But, I say, pard, can't we make some sort of trade on that hoss bizness? I'll tell yo what I'll do. I'll give you my mare and \$500 cash for your horse, and take the chances of findin' the man that borrowed your animal."

"That's a pretty good offer, stranger, but ye see the mare's sort of a favorite with the women folks, and they'd break their hearts ef they thought I sold her. No, stranger, I can't sell; I'd never hear the last of it, an' peace in the family's wuth more to me than \$500. I'm sorry, but I reckon the trade's off. How's that sort of a knot suit ye? 'Tain't as tasty as I'd like, but m' fingers are all thumbs to-day, and you must excuse me ef it don't look as pretty as a red rash on a greaser's stomach. There I reckon that'll do."

"Much obligod, pard." The voice of the highwayman was somewhat choked, but it was not with his emotion. "Are you going? Well, good luck to you."

The men on the rope stepped back two paces. The lariat tightened between the robber's neck and the bough over which it had been slung.

"Any word ye'd like to send your be-reaved relatives?" asked the leader, as he moved away.

"Nothing partic'lar," replied the highwayman. "Nothing except an answer I'd like written to a letter I've got in my pocket."

"I reckon we ken 'tend to that little bizness," said the leader.

"I don't like to trouble you, gentlemen, but it would be a great accommodation to me."

No trouble, stranger. Where's the letter?"

"In my coat pocket."

The leader, after considerable fumbling, found the letter.

"Is this the dockyment?" he inquired.

"That's the paper, and if it wouldn't be too much trouble, perhaps you'll read it aloud to the boys. They might suggest some points for the answer. Besides, I'd like to refresh my own memory a bit."

The leader glanced at the address:

"John R. Richmond, Columbia, Tuolumne County."

"That's me," said the robber. The leader drew the envelope and read loud:

"SWEET HOME, Oct. 21, 1859.—My Darling Boy: The years are dragging wearily by, and I am growing old in my loneliness. The grave seems colder and more cheerless as I totter toward it, bereft of the loving presence of my darling child. Why do you leave me thus in my old age? O, John, I yearn for you. I long to clasp you in my arms once more, to lay my cheek against yours; to kiss the lips I kissed so fondly as you slept in your cradle before you knew a mother's love. It has been fifteen years since you left me—fifteen years of waiting, and watching, and praying for your return. Do you realize how my heart goes out to you—a mother's heart? Do you realize the fear that oppresses her as she thinks of the dangers that surround you in that far away land, among desperate men, whose hand may not be restrained against you by the love a mother bears for a wayward child. Have you forgotten me, John? I almost feel that you have, for I have heard nothing from you for months. I am uncertain that this will reach you. John, your mother, who loves you better than life, is waiting for you, and her eyes are dim with tears of disappointment. My heart aches as I think that perhaps I am forgotten by my beloved son—the only tie that binds me to earth. Shall I ever see my boy again? Shall I clasp him to my bosom once more? O, I could die happy with his arms about me, my head pillowed upon his breast, or his head was once pillowed upon mine. I cannot realize that my darling, my baby, is a man, for in my heart's memory he is still a child—an innocent, laughing, mother-loving boy. Come home, John. It will not be long, and when this feeble body lies cold in the grave you may wander out into the world again. Remember, John, a mother's love is more precious than all besides, and until death comes to end my longing I shall wait—O, so patiently—and watch through my tears for the coming of him who is dearest to me on earth. MOTHER."

The bright sunlight flooded a landscape barren and cheerless. The blue of the sky above was simply a relief such as Nature, in her regard for the fitness of things, had spread over the unattractive prospect for pleasant contrast. As the leader's voice ceased there was a silence in that terrible group for a moment; even the restless horses were still. The stern judges stood like statues grasping the lariat. But the rope had slackened as that mother's pathetic appeal was read. And, standing there on the brink of his grave, John Richmond faced his executioners as calmly, as resigned as if the soul of a martyr animated him instead of a sin-stained, reckless, desperate heart that might shrink from no villainy.

"He's game." The man who spoke had released his hold on the lariat. The leader replaced the letter in Richmond's pocket. Looking around upon his followers he observed that only two of them retained their hold upon the rope, and even these men were doubtful and hesitating. The leader understood the temper of his companions.

"Stranger," he said, striding close to the pinioned man, "whar were ye goin' when we met you?"

"I was going home."

"It's a long way home, stranger."

"I know it."

"And the trail's crooked."

"I won't lose it, pard, if my life is spared."

The leader unbound the highwayman, and, turning to his companions, remarked, in a voice softer than usual:

"Boys, some of us have mothers back in the States, and maybe were thinkin' o' those mothers at this identical minute. It's my opinion that those mothers have saved a man's life to-day." Then to the highwayman: "Stranger its nigh sundown, an' we've got a long road afore us. Good-day." They shook hands, and the leader mounted his horse. As the men rode out from beneath the shadow of the oak the highwayman followed.

"How 'bout the mare, pard? I stick to my bargain."

"Never mind the mare, stranger; there'll be horses when were dead, out a man never had but one mother."

The highwayman watched the horseman as they rode down the hillside—watched them,

silent and motionless, until they disappeared from his view. Then his hand slowly rose to his neck, and lingered there a moment with a soft-clutching movement of the fingers, and the smile that seemed habitual with him swept once more across his face.

"I'll thank that man if I ever meet him," he murmured. "I'll thank him from the bottom of my heart, and I'll ask him to thank that good, kind old mother of his for me. It was lucky for me that his name was the same as mine, or I'd never saved it. It must have been a special Providence, or something of that sort, and I'm thankful to all parties concerned; but it was a close call, all the same."

Like It Vhas in Shermany.

By Carl Dunder.

If I find a man who vhas honest und oop-right I doan' go back on him because he cats mit his kife.

When somepody comes to me and says dis worldt vhas all a sham und dot all men vhas dishonest, I doan' say nothings. I look a leedle oudt dot he doan' steal my beer glassce und deceive me py his lies.

Some men vhill lay for you for a dozen years, und sometimes when you shtub your toe dey vhill shump in und shudge your whole character py der remarks indulged in at dot time.

It vhas pooty easy to wonder how dis mans or dot mans gets along so well and doud't work, but we doan' stop a leedle to see if he doan' wonder der same mit us.

If an oldt man comes to me und asks if he should get married again I tell him it vhas all right. It vhas one of der vways he can make a fool of himself according to law.

Maybe it vhas all right dot some mans vhas very rich and some very poor. If dis vhas not so der poor mans would have nothings to compare himself to und no care for wealth.

Some ofenings when I vhas in my own house a tramp comes along and shtrikes me for a quarter to get a night's lodgin. I owe him nothings, und he vhas a fraud, but I gif it to him because if he shump in der river und I vhas on der coroner's shury it damage me fife dollar.

When some people meet mit troubles dey vhas all knocked to pieces, ash if it vhas totally unexpected. I pelief dot der Lord expected troubles und misfortunes for der whole human race, und dot der man who shlips around'em vhas too mean to go to Heafen.

Der line between ignorance and vice vhas so narrer dot der want of a nickell vhill push a man ofer. Not dot some ignorant men vhas not honest, but dot ignorance vhill make a man pelief dot der worldt owes him a living. When he gets dot idea he vhas ready to shtead der living which der world owes somepody else.

Hadn't Sense Enough for That.

Careful Mamma—"I don't think you ought to sit on the same sofa with Mr. De Lone when he calls to see you, dear."

Charming daughter—"Why, the sofas are great big things. What difference does it make?"

"He might forget himself and suddenly reach over and kiss you."

"Humph! He hasn't sense nough."

Smith's Nerve.

Johnnie—"You are not a bit nervous, are you, Mr. Smith?"

Smith—"Why, no Johnnie; why do you ask?"

Johnnie—"Cause ma said at breakfast to-day, that she thought you had a good deal of nerve to be sitting up with Mary Jane till twelve o'clock without coming to the point."

Bloodshed Averted.

Little Man.—"I understand, sir, that you have called me an unmitigated liar?"

Big Man.—"No, I didn't use the word unmitigated."

Little Man.—"Then I accept your apology."

There are 9,199 licensed saloons in New York city, or one saloon to every 140 inhabitants.

PEARLS OF TRUTH.

There is no man who is not better or worse to-day by means of what he thought, designed, or did yesterday.

Strive for that serenity of spirit that will enable you to make the best of things. That means contentment in its best sense.

Honor your engagement. If you promise to meet a man or do a certain thing at a certain moment, be ready at the appointed time.

If you are fortunate enough to possess youth, be careful in the handling of wine. In its moderate use—as in that of many other blessings—lie health and cheer; but excess means misery and disease.

It is not isolated great deeds which do most to form a character, but small continuous acts touching and blending into one another. The greenness of a field comes not from trees, but from blades of grass.

A good test of one's condition is ability to sleep well. Toil that does not interfere with sleep cannot be said to be excessive. Idleness that prevents sound and refreshing sleep, and takes away the keen appetite for it, robs a man of this among other blessings of life, and makes existence empty.

The quarrelsome man not only poisons the happiness of his own family and friends, but also his own. He generates antagonism, ill-feeling, and dislike wherever he vents his spleen, and these react on him to his misery. When to this is added the internal irritation of his own feelings, it is very certain that he is himself the greatest sufferer from his own pugnacity.

Of all educations that which has for its object the right fulfillment of parental duties would seem among the most important. Yet, as a general thing, that relation is entered upon with only crude and deaultory ideas of the principles involved; and while intelligence and experience slowly bring a measure of wisdom, it often comes too late for the most pressing necessities.

A great portion of all the worst mischief, negative and positive, that ever afflicted the world is traceable to what people erroneously call conscience, but which is often only a hateful compound of ignorance, prejudice, and vindictiveness. The duty of man is to improve those faculties which enable him to think and act correctly. He must make his conscience a good enlightened conscience; then, and then only, will he be entitled to honour and credit in acting upon it.

Benevolence has a farther-reaching service to render to mankind than is usually supposed. Not merely to listen to complaints, to relieve conscious suffering, and to supply recognized deficiencies is her appointed work, but also to detect the poverty that fauces itself rich, the ignorance that thinks itself wise, the grievances suffered unknowingly, the wrongs inflicted unthinkingly, the sins committed without remorse, the woes endured without effort to avert them.

It is all very well to talk of early marriages as in every way best for the morality and general well being of the community. But there is another side. How many foolish boys and girls rush into matrimony without the most distant prospect of even making a reasonably fair start in comfortable house-keeping. They are like the Irishman, who married one day and applied for parish help the next, while he gave as an excuse for his matrimonial venture "we could not be worse and we might be better." They can be worse by marrying. Indeed often are, and the morality is often not a bit better after than before. In this country young people, if at all thrifty and industrious, can make a fair provision for house-keeping before they are twenty-five and no man or woman ought to marry before that time. But to buy the few pieces of furniture "on tick" is too bad. Better never marry at all. And to think of people that do this, talking of love and all that! Pshaw! It is too absurd.

Of Home Development.

"When you have a cold spell," said a Manitoba man to a Torontonian, with a slight tinge of sarcasm, "you say it comes from Manitoba, and when you have a hot spell it comes from Manitoba. Where does your fine weather come from—Manitoba too?"

"Oh no," responded the Torontonian; "our fine weather is of a purely local origin."