

"It is no small penance for me," he began, "to recount the details of my connection with Cotton, since it must not only awaken afresh in my mind many a dormant regret, but likewise make me appear a very different man from what you think me. How my presence in the home of my friend, brought desolation there, rendering his children motherless and all but homeless—these are the things that it pains me to speak about.

"You remember the initials upon the crucifix you found. Those are mine, for my real name is not Dalwit but Jennings. In early life, Cotton and I were fast friends; and when he moved out west with his family, to seek his fortune anew in new lands, I gave him this crucifix as a souvenir of our friendship. The news of Cotton's success—how he had, by honest industry, procured for himself a fairly excellent ranche with a homestead and out buildings, aroused in my mind a determination of also going west. I accordingly collected all the money I had at hand and sent it by mail to Cotton, with instructions to have it invested in prairie lands. I started west myself in a few weeks, carrying with me my remaining wealth which amounted to one thousand dollars in notes.

On my arrival at the home of Cotton, I received a hearty reception from the happy couple. The children, too, seemed overjoyed to see me. However, the pleasure I first felt at the meeting, was somewhat dampened when Cotton told me that he had not received the money I had sent him by mail.

"You must know," he said, "we have not here in the west the efficient mail service of New York or Washington. If your letter has not been delayed by other mishap, it must now be in the hands of some train-wrecker or brigand of the Jessie James type."

As likely as this conjecture might be, I little relished it, and I went to rest that night with a heavy heart. But try as I might, I could not sleep. I tossed about in a fever of vexation, until my nerves became completely unstrung. In order to bring back the quiet to my irritated mind, I finally left my bed-room and went out for a stroll in the cool night air. I made my way toward a small group of prairie maples about a quarter of a mile distant. Here after walking vigorously for some time, I felt my calm restored; and when next I stretched myself on my pallet, I slept without a dream.

*(To be continued.)*