

disgraceful contribution with a gold double-eagle. The remaining non-legal tenders were then converted into gold-dust, and the whole dispatched by express, with a grim note from Pentecost, to the society's treasurer at Boston. As the society was controlled by a denomination which does not understand how good can come out of evil, no detail of this contribution ever appeared in print. But a few months thereafter there did appear at Hanney's a thin-chested, large-headed youth, with a heavily loaded mule, who announced himself as duly accredited by the aforementioned society to preach the Gospel among the miners. The boys received him cordially, and Pentecost offered him the nightly hospitality of curling up to sleep in front of the bar-room fire-place. His mule's load proved to consist largely of tracts, which he vigorously distributed, and which the boys used to wrap up dust in. He nearly starved while trying to learn to cook his own food, so some of the boys took him in and fed him. He tried to persuade the boys to stop drinking, and they good-naturedly laughed; but when he attempted to break up the "little game," which was the only amusement of the camp—the only steady amusement, for fights were short and irregular—the camp rose in its wrath, and the young man hastily rose and went for his mule.

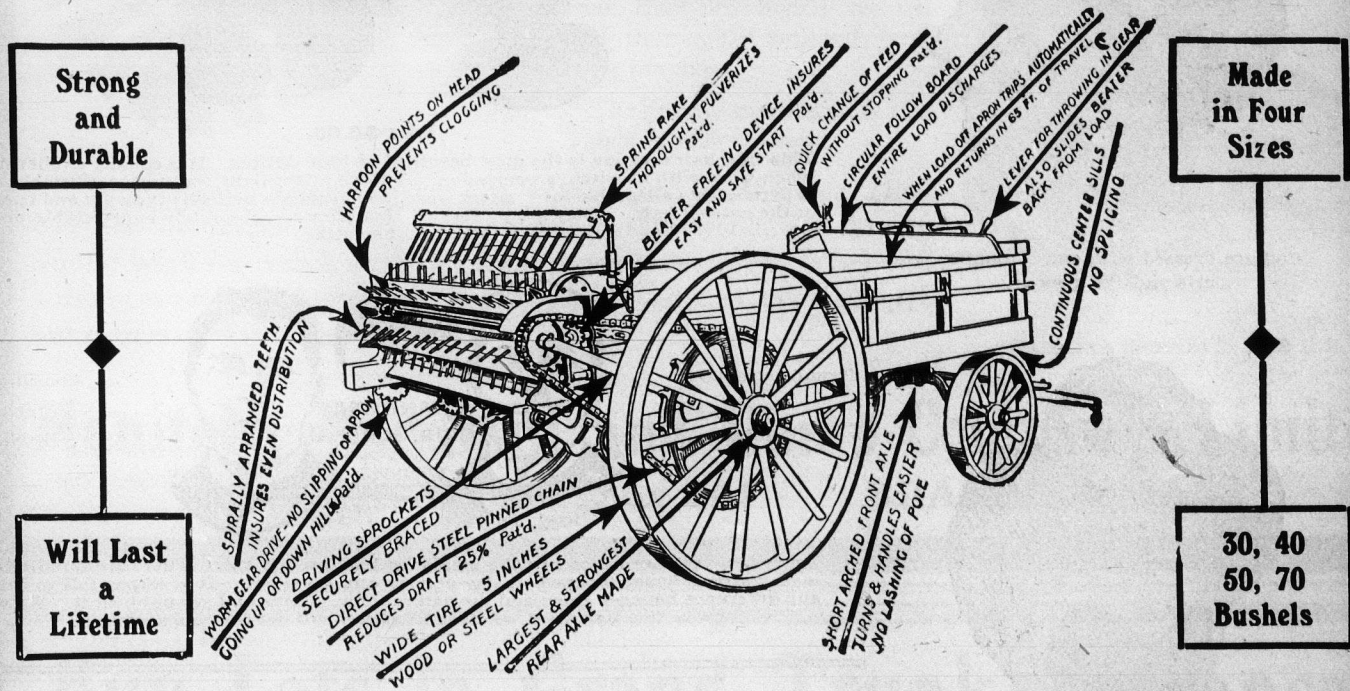
But at the time of which this story treats a missionary would have fared even worse, for the boys were wholly absorbed by a very unrighteous, but still very darling, pleasure. A pair of veteran kniivists, who had fought each other at sight for almost ten years every time they met, had again found themselves in the same settlement, and Hanney's had the honor to be that particular settlement. "Judge" Briggs, one of the heroes, had many years before discussed with his neighbor, Billy Bent, the merits of two opposing brands of mining shovels. In the course of the chat they drank considerable villainous whisky, and naturally resorted to knives as final arguments. The matter might have ended here had either gained a decided advantage over the other; but both were skillful—each inflicted and received so near the same number of wounds that the wisest men in camp were unable to decide which whipped. Now, to average Californians in the mines, this is a most distressing state of affairs; the spectators and friends of the combatants waste a great deal of time, liquor and blood on the subject, while the combatants themselves feel unspeakably uneasy on the neutral ground between victory and defeat. At Sonora, were Billy and the Judge had their first encounter, there was no verdict so the Judge indignantly shook the dust from his feet and went elsewhere. Soon Billy happened in at the same place, and a set-to occurred at sight, in which the average was not disarranged. Both men went about, for a month or so, in a patched-up condition, and then Billy roamed off, to be soon met by the Judge, with the usual result. Both men were known by reputation through the gold regions, and the advent of either at any "gulch" or "washin'," was the best advertisement the saloon-keeper could desire.

Hanney's had been fairly excited for a week, for the Judge had arrived the week before, and his points had been carefully scrutinized and weighed time and again, by every man in the camp. There seemed nothing unusual about him—he was of medium size, with long hair and beard, a not unpleasant expression and very dirty clothes; he never jumped a claim, always took his whisky straight, played as fair a game of poker as the average of the boys, and never stole a mule from any one whiter than a Mexican. The boys had just about ascertained all this, and made their "blind" bets on the result of the next fight when the whole camp was convulsed with the intelligence that Billy Bent had also arrived. Work immediately ceased, except in the immediate vicinity of the champions, and the boys stuck close to the channel, that being the spot where the encounter should naturally take place. Miners thronged in from fifty miles around, and nothing but a special express saved the camp from the horror of Pentecost's bar being

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