

Katie of Red Gulch

By Julia Truitt Bishop.

Tarrant of the East Gets an Object Lesson in the Conditions of the West. He Comes, He Sees, He is Conquered.



AS the Great Northern pushed its grimy nose further and further west, it pushed Douglas Trent along with it, somebody in authority having discovered that he had a genius for affiliating with the West and bringing order out of chaos. Hence it happened that no sooner did the first brick store begin to lay its foundations beside the public square, while the Ladies' Aid Society gave mite socials to raise money for a church-bell, than Trent was moved along to the end of the road, where every other plank shanty was a saloon, and nobody needed a church-bell, because there was no church. Out of this primitive un-Arcadia he was expected to drive the steel rails still further west, to organize and control large bodies of men, and to lick the town into shape, so that he could move out of it. And this was the narrow and boundless life which he had been living some two years.

Once in awhile Tarrant, who was in authority over him, left his carpeted and steam-heated office, and shudderingly went to the end of the line to see how Trent was getting along. When he found Trent he always complained bitterly of everything, from the climate to the baking-powder calendars, which were the sole decoration of the office walls. He made it a special point to complain of Trent's management of men, exhorting to greater firmness and showing conclusively how one must rule these fellows with an iron hand. Then he went back to the comforts of civilization, and said grudgingly that Trent was doing fairly well, but that he needed overlooking once in a while, as he was a man of no originality and did not seem to understand the West. Which, when Trent heard—as one always hears things—made him love his superior dearly, and ask the Fates to let him get even.

The weather should have been all that was beautiful at Red Gulch when Mr. Tarrant stepped from the train on his first visit to that city, it being late April; but in honor of his coming it had chosen to send down a belated norther, with rain, sleet, snow, and a howling wind straight from the frozen pole; and he descended from the train shivering. He had chosen to take Trent by surprise, always filled with the conviction that sooner or later he would find his subordinate "up to something;" consequently Trent was not there to receive him. The soles of Mr. Tarrant's patent-leathers were hot from the steam-pipes over which he had been hovering in the car; the rude platform in front of the plank station was aglare with ice, and the gentleman who was waltzing solemnly up and down the platform was suffering from a temporary defect of vision which made him see four distinct Mr. Tarrants. In trying to dodge three of them he received the fourth in his open arms, head on, and patted his back lovingly.

"Glad shee me?" he questioned. "Coursh glad shee me! Don' blame you. I'd be glad 'shelf. Come on, ol' shport—join in giddy dansh! Not workin' 'day. Nothin' do all day long, dansh wi' you."

He waltzed solemnly on, dragging with him a slipping and sliding and sputtering visitor. Red Gulch gathered merrily to see.

"Let me go, fellow!" roared Mr. Tarrant, tearing himself loose from the giddy dance, and flinging himself out of the way with infinite risk to his neck.

There was a gale of laughter from the bystanders, and he turned furiously. "Who is that drunken beast?" he demanded.

One of the men in the station door replied, with a seductive drawl, "That's Brig Foster, foreman o' construction on this line; an' as he'll be sober about

to-morrow, I wouldn't stay over if I was you, after givin' him that name."

"He is discharged!" shouted Mr. Tarrant, in most undignified wrath. "Do you hear, sir?" "You are discharged! And if you are living in one of the company's houses, see that you get out of it before night!" and Mr. Tarrant strode sulkily across to the Palace Hotel.

His wrath had not subsided when he sought Trent in the little den, politely called an office, over the depot, and found that young man sitting at a deal table, which was his desk. The white cotton cloth tacked over wall and ceiling shrank and swelled cheerfully as the wind blew, and with every gust a puff of smoke poured from beneath the door of the rusty stove.

"Hello! When did you come in?" said Trent, affably, but with the light

and I have already found it necessary to discharge your foreman of construction—a drunken and impertinent scoundrel, wholly unfit for such a position. It is disgraceful, Mr. Trent, disgraceful, sir!"

Trent turned his head toward the window with an air of listening. His face was lit up with an unholy joy.

"Oh. You have discharged Foster!" he remarked, tentatively.

"Yes, sir, I have!" replied Tarrant, visibly swelling, because Trent, who was his inferior in position, and therefore to be bullied, always made him feel uncomfortable instead. "I do not find, Mr. Trent, that you show the ability expected of you in your management of affairs. You must remember, sir, that the West is very different from the East, and that you have to deal with new

now shooting the front out of the Two Brothers saloon, with an occasional clip at the First and Last Chance and The Gem. The two men that you see dodging about the corners back of him are the marshal and his deputy; and the remaining citizens have gone into hiding. He is slowly moving up this way, as you see, Mr. Tarrant—and as he shoots at the two officers whenever they put their heads out—"

Mr. Tarrant had grown a shade paler. "Isn't there any law in this God-forsaken country?" he sputtered.

"The law has just gone behind that corner," said Trent, with judicial calm. "It likes Foster immensely, and doesn't care to kill him nor to be killed by him. You observe that he is coming nearer. I should certainly hate to have these windows shot out, cold as the weather is to-day!" and Trent breathed a regretful sigh.

"Isn't there—isn't there such a thing as a Vigilance Committee?" gasped Tarrant, watching Foster's progress up the main street of Red Gulch.

"Oh, to be sure—Foster is president of the Vig.," returned Trent, amiably.

"There'll be a hot time—in—the ol' town—t'night!" caroled Foster, as he fired impartially at everything that moved. He was bearing rapidly down upon the station.

"Ah-h-h!" murmured Trent, and Tarrant ventured to peep forth again.

From the dining-room of the Palace Hotel issued a girl—the red-haired girl who had given Tarrant his breakfast half an hour before. Her sleeves were still rolled up, and she was throwing a little white shawl over the shining glory of her hair as she walked straight up to the howling, shooting terror in the middle of the street.

"There'll be a hot ti—" caroled Foster. "Hello, Katie! Come on an' help ush tear zhe ol' town wide open."

Then the girl snatched the pistol out of his hand and cuffed his ears. "Go home to your wife, Brig Foster!" she commanded; "and be ashamed of yourself!"

She turned her back upon him, and walked away, while he trailed after her, weeping consumedly.

"I'm 'shamed, Katie—mosht awfl'y 'shamed!" he protested. "Been tryin' think o' zhat all time, an' couldn'—an' sho shot at shaloon."

Trent, watching breathlessly, might have been seen to draw up one foot with ecstasy. "She's coming here!" he murmured, mentally hugging himself, "Now all the saints be praised, she's coming here!"

Whereupon Mr. Trent sat down at the deal table, and began to write with a holy look on his face that might have showed mischief was afoot.

The girl came in, the little white shawl held tight under her chin, but the wind had tossed splendid rings of red-brown hair about her white forehead; and Mr. Tarrant said to himself, with surprise, "if this girl were East she would be a beauty!"

Large eyes, darker than her hair, dwelt upon Mr. Tarrant reflectively, and there was a smile around the mouth that made Mr. Trent look still more pious. The girl still held the pistol she had taken away from Brig Foster.

"This looks like a hold-up, doesn't it?" she said to Mr. Tarrant, with only the merest side-glance at his busy companion. "But I don't really mean any violence. I took it away from a poor fellow who was playing with it down in the street."

"Yes—I saw you," said Mr. Tarrant, grimly. He felt much more comfortable now that the pistol was no longer in the hands of Foster. "It doesn't occur to me that the man deserves much pity."

"Oh, but he does," said the girl, with untruffled composure, declining Trent's stool, and perching herself on the end of the table. "He's a good man, Brig Foster, and he doesn't drink often. And besides, he has a



"Who spoke of intimidation?" she retorted. "I am simply asking you to leave Brig in his place, and being a wise man, you are going to do it."

"I certainly am not!" he cried, regaining confidence. "He stands dismissed, and I mean exactly what I have said."

of battle in his eyes. "No, not that chair; the off hind leg's broken. Take this and I'll sit on the stool. Hope you'll excuse the smoke. The stove rather cuts up when the wind is in the north."

Tarrant kicked the stove door. "It appears to me that everything in this office and everything connected with it is run in a devilish poor fashion," he said, frowningly.

"The stove?" said Trent, guilelessly. "I've been thinking all winter that I'd climb up on the roof some day and fix that pipe, but when it's cold we're using it, and when it's warm—"

"I was not speaking particularly of the stove," retorted Mr. Tarrant, with dignity, buttoning his overcoat tighter. "It seems to me Mr. Trent, that you do not show much discrimination in your selection of men for important posts. I have been in town an hour,

conditions here, sir. And it is necessary to handle these men without gloves, Mr. Trent, without gloves, as I have done in the case of this man Foster. Namby-pamby dealings may go in the East, but here everything is different. You do not seem to understand the conditions of the West—"

Thus far had Tarrant maundered on to his own undoing, when he saw that Trent had risen from his desk, and was at the window.

"You discharged him!" he murmured, sweetly. "That explains it!"

"Explains what?" questioned Tarrant, suddenly becoming conscious of a popping as of champagne-corks. He joined Trent at the window.

"When I saw Foster, just before your train pulled in," said Trent, gently, "he had merely been drinking. You discharged him, and he then proceeded to go on a tear that would last. He is