

ESCAPED BY A SCRATCH

A Merchant's Adventure in the Southwest.

A Traveler Falls Into the Hands of Desperados - Saved by a Girl - All's Well that Ends Well.

Many years since I took a fancy to travel far beyond the region of railroads and steamboats into one of the new territories of the southwest. My object was to see what could be done on a large scale in the way of trade.

It was toward the close of a fine spring day that I rode up to the great barnlike tavern of one of those spread out, pine board towns of the far west which grow up so rapidly in the path of emigration. A large group of rude looking men stood on the steps and seemed to be carefully criticising me and comparing notes as I dismounted. I was conscious of nothing peculiar about me, except the generally smart and "natty" appearance of myself and animal. The latter was a splendid roadster that I had purchased in St. Louis, in fine condition, and with an action that would excite the admiration of any horse fancier. I was habited in a new suit, surmounted by a slouched hat, and completed by great top boots. My saddle and bridle were half military in their shape and trimmings, and I had a valise and blanket roll strapped on behind. On the whole, I think almost any observer would have set me down for something more than a mere private citizen traveling on his own business.

I left my horse in care of the first man whom I found willing to take him and, ordering my supper, walked about the uninviting barroom and finally took a seat and began to read a pamphlet that I had in my pocket. While I was thus engaged a great burly fellow came and stood in the doorway and deliberately stared at me. "Good evening, sir," I said. "I should like to make a few inquiries if you please, about the people here and through the country, and"

"Not of me, you won't!" was his rude rejoinder, and he was gone before I could ask an explanation.

I was a little nettled at such boorishness, still rather amused than annoyed. I should probably have thought no more of it but for more of the same kind of treatment that I shortly experienced. A shock headed girl called me out to supper, and, finding a table abundantly spread with the substantial of life, I was appeasing my hunger vigorously when a wild, wolfish face was thrust inside the door, and two staring eyes surveyed me closely.

"What's wanted?" I asked, rather irritated by the repetition of such an attention. There was no answer, the head was withdrawn, and within the same minute I had the pleasure of seeing two more faces looking in upon me through one of the windows.

"What do those people mean?" I asked of the girl who waited on me. She shook her head, but there was an expression on her face that informed me that she did know and that she pitied me. I was beginning to feel decidedly uncomfortable; my appetite was spoiled before it was half appeased, and I resolved on the spot to continue my journey that night rather than remain in such an inhospitable place.

I rose from my chair and put down three silver dollars on the table. "That's for my supper and the horse's feed," I said to the girl, "and you may keep the rest yourself. Now, please tell them to bring the horse around right off, for I must be gone."

I shall never forget the look of pain and pity that was shown at that moment by the face of that rude, homely girl.

"They won't give you the horse," she said shortly. "Won't give me my own horse?" I echoed. "And why not, pray?" "Hush!" she said, laying her hand firmly on my mouth. "Don't be making a noise. If they should think you suspected it, they would do it now."

Now, although I had no idea of the full import of her startling words, yet there was a hideous suggestion in them that fairly made my flesh creep. "For heaven's sake tell me what you mean!" I said faintly. "I can't account for the actions of these people. What do they mean, and what am I to do?"

she looked at first incredulous, but I continued to assure her of my real character, and she, seeing my sincerity, soon believed me. "But you can't make them believe it," she quickly added. "The last marshal that was here was dressed and mounted just like you, and that question you asked Aleck Maxwell made 'em sure you're the same kind. The truth is, and she lowered her voice, 'there's a great many horse thieves and cattle stealers in this county—the people are pretty much up to it—and there's dozens of 'em sworn never to let an officer go out of the county alive."

"What did they do to the marshal you speak of?" I asked, with a cold shiver. "Well, they just hung him to that live oak across the road and buried him under it."

"Good heaven! But I'm not a marshal; I wouldn't harm a man in the county if I could."

She shook her head. "It's no use, stranger," she said. "They won't believe you; your looks belie everything you say. They'll serve you the same way."

"Can't I escape?" I asked, in a perfect agony of terror. "Get my horse and let me go."

"It's no use; they'd kill me if I got your horse for you. Here!" She softly opened a door and pointed out. "It's a slim chance for life, but it's your only one. Take to the woods, and may heaven have mercy on you! Don't stop to thank me—go!"

I waited for no second invitation, but cleared the house and plunged into the woods unobserved. I ran without stopping for some time, and then unexpectedly found myself in the highway that I had traveled two hours before, with the village visible a mile away. The truth was I had cut off a great corner of the woods in my flight, and, the road turning, I had thus struck it.

It was now almost twilight, but a shout warned me that I was discovered, and the sound of furious galloping broke on my ear. I was too much exhausted to fly farther, even if that could have done any good. I dropped down behind the trunk of a huge tree and desperately awaited my fate. I had my pistols with me, and I resolved that I would not be lynched without a struggle.

A dozen horsemen rode up to within a few yards of where I lay and, separating, rode hither and thither about the skirts of the woods. The hoof of one of the horses once brushed my leg, but I lay quiet and was not discovered, though I lay trembling. Soon the party gathered for a consultation, and, with plenty of curses on the devoted head, they agreed that I must have taken to the woods again, but that I could not be far off.

By common consent they dismounted, hitched their horses and, dividing into two parties, plunged into the woods on each side of the road. I waited, with beating heart, until they had gone so far that I could not distinguish their voices, though I could see the flashing of the lanterns they had lighted, and then I stole forth from my concealment.

What was my surprise and delight to discover my own gallant steed hitched with the others, with portmanteau and blankets strapped to the saddle. In the act of mounting him a sudden thought occurred to me, and I acted on it promptly. I had a sharp pocket-knife and a minute sufficed to cut every saddle girth and bridle. Then I mounted my horse and put him to a gallop which I never allowed him to slacken for five miles. I traveled over 20 miles farther, and never halted until I had found the sheriff of the adjoining county and put myself under his protection. He heard my story and said:

"A pretty close thing, my friend. They'd have hung you at sight if they'd laid hands on you. But you're safe now; they won't venture over here. I've got warrants for the arrest of more than half of them, and they know it."

I never learned that they were able to make any pursuit that night, but I should think not, after the situation I had left them in.—New York News.

Love at First Sight.

"It was a case of love at first sight," writes the romancer in telling a story that is designed to catch the fancy of the reader, for the romancer, and every one else, for the matter of that, "loves a lover," and the tradition that the love comes swiftly is ever so much more romantic than that which comes slowly, obtains every day, has always obtained and probably always will obtain.

discussing this subject, and I listened. But, then, it is no breach of confidence to listen to the chatter of two people whom you may chance to sit behind in a railroad car when the day is gray and the journey long. The usual order of things was reversed in this conversation that is, one naturally expects to hear youth, and a woman particularly, take the more romantic view of the case—love at first sight and all that sort of thing—but it was the man who doesn't pretend to be young any longer who asserted that the only sort of love that was "worth shucks" was of the first sight variety, while the girl with the earnest gray eyes said she hadn't one bit of faith in the love that it was claimed came so swiftly.

"Why," she said, "how can one person love another without knowing that other one?"

And down in my heart I echoed "How?" But the man assured her, or tried to, that it was quite possible—in fact, that a man or woman who was cold-blooded enough to weigh in the balance all the good and bad qualities of another before he or she made up his or her mind to marry was too calculating for any use. Then the man went on to say that often in a crowd two persons would meet and that immediately one or both would recognize that life had taken on a different hue; that it was the meeting of two souls.

"Well, Cousin John," said the girl, "what you say may be all true enough, but I call that attraction. Love may come later, or may not. It is always wise, I think, to wait, though, and be sure that loves does follow."

And Cousin John, seeming to have no answering argument, took refuge behind a laugh and twitted the girl about having a "hot more head than heart."

"Cousin John," finally exclaimed the girl, looking up from the pages of the book she had just opened to read while Cousin John had settled down into the corner of the seat and was gazing out on the gray day, "I have just this moment reached a conclusion."

Cousin John turned to her with a smothered sigh that somehow hinted that his thoughts as he gazed from the car window had been tinged with a little sadness.

"I have just concluded," said the girl, "that the reason you are a bachelor is that when love has come your way you have not recognized it. Unfortunately you are not evenly balanced."

"Perhaps," said Cousin John. "You are a bit practical and a whole lot romantic. You have been disappointed because 'the swift and sudden' sort of love has not come to you. You have waited for that 'affinity spark' that was to strike you suddenly in a crowd or at a chance meeting in some lonely dell, when the lady of your dreams would appear from around a tangle of vines or some such appropriately romantic setting, and you would immediately recognize in her the woman for whom you had sought, and in vain, until that very moment. Now, there is Miss Laura West—Oh, fairly gasped the girl, "I have reached another conclusion! Yes, Cousin John—funny I had not thought of it before—I am going to make a match!"

Had the girl looked at Cousin John just then she would have seen something like a blush creep over his face. But she didn't.

"Oh, goodly! Miss Laura is living now right next door to Aunt Mary. Did you think of that, Cousin John, when you agreed to come down here with me for a week's stay?"

Now the girl was looking straight at the man. His answer was a little vague. But the girl was quick to detect shams.

"Of course you did," she declared. "You have grown to love Miss Laura. And it wasn't love at first sight either. How long have you known her, Cousin John? Let me see. Mother said it was when you were at Sweet Springs. That must be 15 years ago. Cousin John, have you let Miss Laura wait for you all these years, believing that because you were such fast friends you were not lovers?"

"I am afraid I may have, little girl." And Cousin John said this more to himself than aloud.

How well that girl was getting on in her new role of matchmaker I am certain she hardly knew. For the balance of that day's journey Cousin John acted like a man happy in a sudden inspiration, and when he and the girl got off the train at a picturesque little railroad station and a half dozen or so pretty women flocked about the platform to greet them I had no difficulty in guessing which was "Miss Laura." In looking back from the car window I saw Cousin John in the back seat with Miss Laura as the trap bowed up hill toward a big white house with a wide lawn, with a smaller house with larger lawn just next to it. The smaller

house, I fancied, was Miss Laura's home. "Love at first sight" may be a good thing, but I have known the love that has grown slowly, but very surely, to be a better.—Margaret Hannis in St. Louis Republic.

Author of "Eben Holden."

A many sided man is Irving Bacheller, author of "Eben Holden," one of the most successful books of the season. It is a story of the north country, known to tourists as the Adirondack region, and the delightful portrayal of unique characters is due to Mr. Bacheller's keen observation, superior sense of humor and a soul of poetry and romance which even a business career in the metropolis has not sullied. "The characters," says the author, "were mostly men-and women I have known and who left with me a love of my kind that even a wide experience with knavery and misfortune has never dissipated."

Mr. Bacheller was for years the head of a syndicate which supplied literature to newspapers, and some of the best stories and special articles ever published in the daily papers of America were among the wares thus dispensed. Sunday editions of the better class thrived on Bacheller literature. To his friends, however—and they are legion—it was always apparent that he worshiped at the shrine of the muses rather than the altar of Mammon.

While "Eben Holden" is Mr. Bacheller's most conspicuous success and places him in the front rank of American authors, he is not a single story writer, as "A Master of Silence" and "The Uninvited Guest," two novels of note, were received with more than ordinary favor.—Rx.

The Grave of Annie Laurie.

It has just been discovered that the grave of Annie Laurie, the heroine of the world famous ballad, has remained for all these years without a tombstone. Many people are under the delusion that Annie Laurie was merely a figment of the poet's brain. But this was not so. She was the daughter of Sir Robert Laurie and was born in Maxwellton house, which stands on the "braes" immortalized in the song. Her birth

is thus set down in the Barjorg manuscript: "At the pleasure of the Almighty God, my daughter, Annie Laurie, was born upon the 16th day of December, 1682, about 6 o'clock in the morning, and was baptized by Mr. George, minister of Glencairn." Maxwellton house is still full of memories of this winsome girl, and in the long drawing room there still hangs her portrait. Her lover and the author of the original song was young Douglas of Finland, but whether he, as is common with lovers of poetic temperament, did not press his suit sufficiently or whether she wished a stabler husband, she gave her hand to a prosaic country laird, her cousin, Mr. Alexander Ferguson. They lived the rest of their lives at Craigdarroch house, five miles from Maxwellton, and when she died Annie was buried in the beautiful glen of the Cairn. Lady Scott Spottiswoode, who died early in the present year, was responsible for the modern version of the song.—Rx.

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