

LIFE MAY BE HAPPY.

Call this not life
A scene of misery, or a vale of tears;
God made it life
With blessings, and his goodness eye appears.

He made us so
That happiness we seek, and can obtain;
And this we know,
The truthful seeker never seeks in vain.

Choose virtue's ways;
Live in the bonds of brotherhood and love;
Then shall thy days
Being spent in worthy actions, happy prove.

Life's purpose set—
Duty to God and man alike being done—
Forth from the shore
Death a friendly bark conducts to realms unknown.

And as we here
Find that God's laws are merciful and just;
There, without fear,
We his unerring wisdom firmly trust.

JESSE JAMES.

III.

THE TRAIN ROBBERY.

The men who had fought their way through a legion of detectives many times, started back in absolute dismay as the dark beauty of the backwoods, with flashing, determined eye and resolute face boldly confronted the would-be murderers of Wardell, the detective.

Jesse James had turned a shade paler, an angry oath broke from Bob Younger's lips, while Bucher, with lowering brow, edged his way through the crowd to where the dauntless girl stood.

James, his revolver dropped to his side, had turned to his men.

"Around the front way," he ordered, in a quick undertone. "Head him off before he reaches the road."

"Drop that pistol," ordered Bucher to the girl.

"I will not."

The landlord's flaming features told how wild was the pent-up anger in his breast.

"It will be better for you if you do," he muttered menacingly. "No darter o' mine shall help these infernal detectives to git away."

The girl regarded him fixedly.

"You are a villain, Jacob Bucher," fell deliberately, calmly, from her lips: "a cold-blooded villain to betray a guest."

"Hear her!" cried Bucher. "This to her old father!"

"You are not my father!"

Had a thunderbolt fallen at the feet of the tavern-keeper it could scarcely have amazed him more than did these words. Unexpected, startling, they seemed also to impress Cole Younger, who uttered an excited ejaculation in an undertone and glanced in some alarm at Bucher.

"Ye deny yer parents, ongrateful girl?"

"You are not my parents. O', you can deceive me no longer, Jacob Bucher. I have learned the secret you and your associates hope to profit by."

She had kept the revolver in her hand, commanding the narrow passage-way through which the detective had escaped. Intent upon affording him time and opportunity to escape, and keeping the bandits at bay, she had anticipated no secret foe. She was not aware that her liberty was menaced until a stealthy form creeping behind her from the kitchen grasped the revolver and pinioned her hand with a powerful grasp.

It was the woman she called mother, Mrs. Bucher, the tavern-keeper's wife. Her coarse face beamed triumphantly down into that of her pretended daughter's as she roughly dragged her after her.

"I'll fix the gal," she cried vindictively. "I'll teach her if she'll disown her nat'ral parents and befriend the white-livered detectives when her husband that is to be stands in peril of being hung." And she glanced significantly at Cole Younger.

"What does she know—how comes she to suspect that she is not your daughter?" inquired Younger in a low undertone of Bucher.

"I dunno."

"Well, you've made a pretty kettle of fish of it. I won't feel safe until she's married to me. Remember, Bucher, there's a fortune for both of us if we carry out our plans."

"Then why don't you marry her?" inquired the tavern-keeper testily.

"When?"

"Now."

"Here?"

"Yes. I kin send for a parson and hev the knot tied at once."

"That suits me," replied Younger, heartily.

"But it don't me," interrupted James, unceremoniously.

"Why not?" asked both men in a breath.

"Because we've got work to do."

"To-night?"

"Yes. If the men capture that infernal detective we must be off by midnight. If not we'll simply have to undo the work we've settled on."

"Very well, Bucher, keep the girl locked up until we get this little job off our hands, and we'll settle her case."

James had turned to Bob Younger.

"That detective," he said. "It will bother us a little if he escapes."

"How?"

"He overheard our conversation."

"About the train robbery?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"Well, it's plain that he'll make his way to the nearest station and alarm the road. When we get to the Junction we'll find a band of vigilants there."

Both men were anxious for the return of the bandits who had started in pursuit of the detective. Their faces wore an eager expression of suspense as they heard them returning, and hastened to the y randa.

"What luck, Jones," inquired James of the foremost of the men.

"He's settled, Captain."

"Dead?"

"Dead as a herring."

"Where is he?"

"Floating down the river, food for the fishes."

An exclamation of satisfaction escaped the outlaw's lips.

"Good!" he cried exultantly.

"You see," explained Jones, "we drove him close to the creek and he jumped for it. Just as he was reaching the opposite shore I fired. He sunk like a dead weight, done for."

"You think he could not have escaped?"

"Impossible."

James turned to Younger, "The railroad scheme," he said.

"It comes off to-night?" inquired the other.

"Certainly."

"When shall we start?"

"As agreed, at midnight."

Three hours later eight men, superbly mounted, drove away from the backwoods tavern in an easterly direction.

They halted after proceeding a few rods, as a form came flying from the tavern, wildly gesticulating and shouting to them to stop.

It was Bucher, excited, pale and breathless. James reined up his steed.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"The gal."

"What of her?"

"She has escaped."

"She won't run far," laconically remarked the outlaw.

But Cole Younger, somewhat perturbed, approached Bucher.

"She's gone, you say?" he asked.

"Yes. My wife locked her in the garret. Just now she found the window open, a sheet torn in strips hanging from it, and the gal gone. Can't ye follow her?"

"No," spoke James, peremptorily, "if Cole can't run his love affairs without bothering our plans, he'd better go to farming."

"I'll search for her when we return," said Younger. "You don't think she'd give us away, Bucher?" he supplemented, anxiously.

"Taint likely. She's found out she ain't my darter, and has got tired of this backwoods life."

The cavalcade moved on. The drive was a clear ten leagues stretch, mainly through timber, and it was towards early dawn that they reached that section of the track where they proposed to put their nefarious project to wreck and pillage a train, into execution.

Ten miles north was the Junction, south, for twenty miles there was no station. At the point where they had stopped, the express train would come dashing around a sharp curve, if on time, within half an hour.

"To work, boys," ordered James, as they dismounted from their steeds.

It was evident from their actions that the plan they were about to execute had been projected and provided for during the preceding day. From a thicket they procured two large, broad iron clamps, with an adjustable centre-piece, adaptable to the gauge of the road. These they proceeded to fasten firmly to the rails, and then secured several pieces of heavy timber, wedged the latter in an upright position between the two clamps.

A dozen or more logs and railroad ties were piled carefully on this barricade, and several heavy rocks placed on top of the heap forming a formidable barrier to the expected train.

Within ten minutes after their arrival the bandits, working with rare system and rapidity, had perfected the initial step in their desperate undertaking.

"Is all ready?" inquired James.

"All ready, captain," sang out one of the men.

"Very well. Four of you mount the horses and divide, two on each side of the track. When the crash comes hold the men in the train. If any one runs for it shoot them. The rest of us will take the inside of the train. Don't hesitate to shoot for keeps, if in danger."

The outlaws looked to their revolvers, as in the distance they heard the long shrill whistle of the engine announcing its approach to the curve.

James had walked to a position commanding a view of the track.

The next moment the distant headlight of the engine revealed to the bandits the outline of their leader's form watching the train.

He, like the others, had placed a mask on his face covering the upper portion of his features. Through the eye-holes his glance was keen and penetrating as the watchful glare of the ferret.

In excited expectation the band awaited the denouement of their desperate scheme. They saw the engine near at hand; their leader ready

to spring amid the wreck as soon as the barricade was reached.

And then they started, and a unanimous ejaculation of dismay and surprise broke from their lips.

For there, plainly visible, in the radius of light shed forth by the headlight of the advancing locomotive, was the form of a man.

He was dashing down the slight incline leading to the track. Hatless, pale, his hair disordered, his manner that of wild excitement, he held in his hand a white handkerchief which he waved frantically as he sprang towards the track.

His purpose was apparent to the outlaws at a glance—to signal the engine and warn the engineer ere he turned the curve, around which awaited the fated train, destruction, disaster and death.

IV.

TOO LATE.

The man who recked not that he risked his life in his frantic endeavors to save life and property, was Wardell, the detective. The events which led to his singular appearance at a critical juncture in the plans of the outlaws, were exciting and strange, and deserve the retrospect their recital involves.

When in the Bucher tavern he had found a friendly protector and auxiliary to escape in the charming backwoods maiden, known as Lillian Bucher, he had not been slow to avail himself of her command.

"Escape!" she had said, and as he saw the bandits shrink back from her extended revolver, he comprehended at once that she realized what she was undertaking, and that by remaining and sharing her peril he would only complicate matters.

He therefore darted through the narrow hallway and out of the kitchen door, almost overturning the startled Mrs. Bucher in his wild flight.

Indecided which way to go, and knowing that he would soon be pursued, he did not take the road, but struck off towards a belt of timber in the near distance, hoping to gain a temporary hiding place before being discovered by his enemies.

He was regretful that he had not hurried to the front of the tavern and mounted one of the horses of the bandits, but kept on at a rapid gait, bent upon eluding his pursuers in the forest if possible.

He had almost reached the belt of timber when a shot whizzed close to his head, and loud shouts behind him told him that the chase on the part of the bandits had commenced. A quick glance directed towards the tavern revealed to his startled gaze the forms of several men hastening on his trail.

Dashing into the woods, he did not pause in his flight. He had been discovered, and to hide would be to court death, for the woods were small in extent and surrounded by the outlaws. His place of concealment would doubtless be soon discovered.

"I'll run for it," he determined, and his feet traversed the green sward at a rapid gait.

He paused momentarily dismayed as he found that the timber terminated at the edge of a river, broad and swift-rolling. He had no alternative save to turn and face his pursuers and fight them boldly, or to gain the opposite side of the stream. He decided on the latter course, and resolutely plunging into the chilling water, began to swim across the stream.

The current at mid-river was strong, and he breasted it with difficulty. His heart beat hopefully as he saw the willow-lined bank of the river near at hand, and was about to catch at the overhanging branches and swing himself ashore when a shot struck the water near where he was.

A quick thought flashed into his mind, and was as rapidly placed in execution. As his eye discerned the copse-lined banks of the river, he determined to risk an experiment. An expert swimmer, feigning to be shot, he dodged down under the water and struck out for the shore.

As his head again came above the surface of the stream, he observed with satisfaction that he had reached a spot where the dense branches of the interlaced willows formed a thick shield between himself and the view of his pursuers. He remained perfectly quiet, his feet touching the pebbly bottom of the river, and watched his enemies as they regarded the spot where he had disappeared.

"He is done for," he heard one of them say. "Certain," assented a companion: "come, let us get back to the tavern."

A sigh of relief broke from Wardell's lips as his pursuers retraced their way to the inn, but he remained in the water for some time until certain that he was safe to clamber to land.

Seated on the banks of the river, his mind was busy as he enjoyed a breathing spell after his exciting adventure.

"What shall I do," he mused. "These men meditate a terrible crime, involving a possible large loss of life. Now that I am out of the way, they will not hesitate to put these plans into execution. Forrester is the nearest town, but the railway does not come near there, and besides the James boys have many friends there. The Rock Island road is sheer thirty miles across the country, and ten miles more if I hope to reach a station. The outlaws start at midnight. With several hours start of them, why can I not anticipate them and save the train. I will try it at all events."

He arose to his feet and with an emotion of gratitude towards the plucky backwoods girl who had saved his life at the risk of her own, traversed the stream for some distance, forded it at a shallow spot, and struck off towards the east at a keen run.

Thirty miles, with possibly less than six hours to gain the railroad. He was confident that he could accomplish the feat, and he did not relax his energies as he kept up a steady run over the prairie and through the timber. Once a large track of swamp land necessitated a circuitous course of many miles and involved a loss of over an hour's precious time, but he kept on resolutely, and wearied and breathless as he was, resolved to devote every energy to reaching the road in time.

He had avoided the highways which he crossed, for unfamiliar as he was with the country, he knew not but that he might run directly upon the bandits. It was towards morning when he came very nearly being discovered by the men he sought to avoid. He was about to cross a road, preparatory to again pursuing his journey through the woods, when he dodged behind a tree just as a band of horsemen came into view a few rods down the road.

"The James boys," murmured Wardell. They were riding along leisurely, evidently to rest their horses. The detective listened eagerly, as they passed him. His vigilance and caution were rewarded by a valued discovery, for as they passed him, he heard one of the bandits ask,

"How much farther is the railroad?"

"Two miles," was the reply. "We have a full hour yet."

When they had ridden on, the detective accelerated his footsteps to gain the track in time to hasten south and warn the train.

He became confused in his journey through the forest, and fervently wished he had taken the road despite the risk. As he gained an opening in the timber, he was startled as he heard in the near distance a whistle.

"Too late!" he groaned, despairingly, "it is the express train."

He did not see the outlaws a short distance to his left, did not even observe the silent figure of Jesse James near at hand. As he discovered the roadway of the track a hundred yards distant, he started on a keen run towards the spot, his fluttering handkerchief in his hand.

At that moment, just as he reached the side of the track, the giant monster of iron and steam dashed around the curve at a tremendous rate of speed.

He waved the handkerchief frantically and shouted loudly to the engineer.

Movement and voice failed to attract the attention of the latter any more than was Wardell conscious that James had fired a wild shot at him.

On, on thundered the train, the detective choked by the clouds of dust, deafened by the roar of the fast-whirling wheels.

Then a crash, an awful series of shrieks of pain and alarm, then as the fast-rushing cars were abruptly stopped, piled in indiscriminate confusion by the side of the track, a flying timber struck the brave detective and felled him insensible to the ground.

The only persons present who preserved a calm composure throughout the entire affair were the outlaws.

Those of the passengers who were not stunned or injured were terrified, as, in addition to the hissing of the steam and the cries of their companions, a volley of pistol shots rattled into the wrecked cars.

Jesse James had boarded the palace car, his brother Frank at the other end.

With leveled revolver he approached the frightened passengers. The car had been derailed, but was not otherwise injured.

"Shell out your money and valuables," he ordered, "or Jesse James will leave the memento of a bullet in your carcasses."

The mention of that terrible name had its due effect. Watches, jewelry, pocketbooks fished from behind pillows and from pockets were hastily thrown into the bag carried by the outlaw, while his companions ransacked the remainder of the train.

The engineer and conductor dared not move. Covered by the revolvers of the outside band, they were powerless to resist.

With a mocking laugh, James called his men around him, after they had railed the cars.

"Nearly seventy thousand dollars," he said, "a good haul. Ha!"

He had discovered the detective's body lying by the side of the track.

Stooping over, he deliberately placed the muzzle of his revolver against his forehead.

"I'll finish his bold career," he vaunted.

"Spare your powder, he's dead already," said Frank James.

"They're firing from the train."

The outlaw turned, and ordering his men to follow his example, directed a volley of bullets to silence the weak fusilade.

A minute later the bandits mounted their horses and rode rapidly back towards the forest.

And an hour later Wardell, the detective, still confused and badly bruised by his accident, staggered from the spot to a neighboring tree to rest his weary frame.

Vanquished, he was not despairing, for as he sank upon the green sward he murmured, "My turn will come, and then let Jesse James and all his murderous band beware!"

(To be continued.)