

NO MORE USE FOR BAD MAN

He Has Gone From the Country Never to Return

He Last Appeared in Corona, Cal. Where He Lassoed a Young Lady Dragging Her Through the Street.

It is settled: the day of the "bad" man is over in California. He is doomed to become as extinct as the dodo or the ichthyosaurus. He can survive only in song or story.

No longer may he shoot up towns, throw the lariat indiscriminately, or get the drop on the offending tenderfoot, with impunity.

The march of civilization is too strong for him. He must either reform or migrate. That is the fiat.

It has gone forth from the little town of Corona, down on the edge of the desert, in Riverside county, where the bad man last asserted himself.

To the younger generation of Californians it doesn't seem possible that the really exists within the borders of the state—outside the pages of Bret Harte and the records of the Vigilantes.

That he still survives in the ragged crevices of civilization—known vaguely as "the frontier" and the territories it is admitted, and now and then an isolated specimen of him is discovered, as sometimes far in the foothills is found a solitary example of the big game that has passed—a lonely, grim, old grizzly or an elk.

Down in the little town of Corona the other day the bad man came to the surface temporarily, and his punishment followed—swift and sure—and was woefully discouraging.

On the 28th of March three Mexican halfbreeds came riding into the little town that lies about twenty-three miles south of San Bernardino. They were cowboys. It had been payday with them, and they were on pleasure bent, hungry for any sort of excitement that would bring forgetfulness of the monotony of the range sheep.

They laid a foundation for their gaiety by drinking all the hard liquor they could hold, and having reached a satisfactory merry stage they proceeded in orthodox, dime novel fashion to shoot up the town. They were all mounted and riding with the Spanish bits that bring a horse to his haunches with the touch of a finger.

"bad" man was not to escape. He had left his lariat behind, drawn around his victim, and late in the night it was identified as Francisco Quevas' by some Mexicans who knew him. That was enough. He was quickly overtaken and brought back—and just escaped being lynched. He was popped into jail. That was late in the night of March 28th.

Then public sentiment in regard to the "bad" man expressed itself. For once in a way there was no lagging in the legal process.

On April 6th, Francisco Quevas was sentenced to two years' imprisonment in San Quentin.

At first he pleaded not guilty, but proof and sentiment were so strong against him that he cringed and changed his plea to guilty, with the hope of getting off with a light punishment. It availed him nothing, however. He will have to pay for his in-judicious hilarity with two years in state prison.

That's the way California feels about the "bad" man now—and it marks his doom.

He is being civilized out of existence. He has outlived his excuse for being—and he is being done away with. Punishment swift and sure is the remedy for him, and it is effective.

Owen Wister, who perhaps knows more of the real inwardness of the "bad" man than anyone else, than even the "bad" man himself—for he is not as a rule good at self-analysis—discusses him picturesquely and scientifically in Rverybody's Magazine for this month. Here is an etching from life that he makes of him:

"A stripling of effeminate rosiness and neat attire sat in the corner of a frontier saloon, modest, silent and as far out of the way as he could get. He had stepped from the train, and he was waiting for the stage. It was starchy linen that he wore; the city showed quite plainly in his hat; and it is still in dispute whether any down was visible on his lip. But he was old enough to be smoking a cigar with all the appearance of habit. This cigar, also, was not a native of the town. In fact the young man had made no purchase upon entering the saloon; nevertheless, the proprietor could scarcely complain of him. The stranger had asked if he might wait here for the stage, and had thanked the proprietor for his permission.

"Then he had sought his quiet corner, and lighted his cigar. "That was all. It seems harmless and proper conduct, does it not? You would not say that there was anything here to invite calamity; what offense had the youth given?"

"His trouble was that he had come to the wrong place. There are parts of the world where not to be indigent constitutes in itself an offense; and this town was one of them. Of course nobody had been born there yet—a grown-up person, that is—and therefore you might say that nobody was indigent. But there are also parts of the world where you can become indigent in fifteen minutes; only this poor youth had no chance. Nor had he any wish save to sit in his inconspicuous corner and smoke his cigar in peace. With his neat clothes, however, and his white shirt, there could be no in-conspicuousness in that town.

"A citizen walked out of the back room and up to the bar. He had left a faro game; and the proprietor was friendly with him, but respectful; that sort of respect which is flavored delicately with just enough familiarity to bring it out. It is probable that the citizen had had more drinks than the one he now took. It is also likely that faro had not gone as well with him this morning as he considered his due. His dissatisfied eye fell upon the rosy youth and his cigar; and he took the glass from his lips and held it, considering the strange.

"At length, without removing his eyes, he inquired: 'What Christmas tree did that drop off of?'"

"The proprietor hastened to take this view: 'Its express tag has fluttered away, I guess,' he whispered, jocosely.

"The citizen remembered his whisky, swallowed it, set the glass gently down, gently drew out his six shooter, and shot the cigar to smash out of the young man's mouth.

"Now, I do not at all know what I should have done in the young man's place. Something sensible, I hope. What the youth did I know I should not have done. You will see that his behavior was out of the common. He stooped down, picked up his cigar, found it ruined, put it in the spittoon, got a fresh one out of his pocket, found a match in his waistcoat, slid it along the seat of his nice breeches, lighted the new cigar and settled himself once more in his chair, without a word of protest or an attempt at resentment. The proprietor saw him do it all and told about it afterward.

"The citizen took the second cigar, smacked like the first. Perhaps he went a trifle nearer the youth's lip.

"What were the card players in the back room doing at all this noise? They all lay flat on the floor like the well-trained, indigent people that they were, minding their own business. There was no rear exit.

"The youth felt in his waistcoat pocket, but brought no match from it.

So he rose with still another fresh cigar in his hand, and walked to the bar.

"I'll have to ask you for a match," he said to the proprietor, who at once accommodated him.

"Once again he slid the match beneath his coat-tails, and bringing up his own six-shooter, shot the citizen as instantly dead as that can be done.

"When the young man came for the match, I wanted to make him ask, not the proprietor but the citizen for it. You can see for yourself how thrilling it would be to have the citizen made the innocent contributor to his own destruction. That slight change would have made a fine, flagrant, unlikely thing out of it, good enough for a play. And it would be easy enough now to run on and pretend, say, that the proprietor immediately pushed the bottle of whisky and the box of cigars toward the youth, urge him to help himself freely, loaded him with congratulations, told him that he had been just going to kill the deceased himself, because deceased was an out-rage on the face of the earth, and the town had got tired of him. While this was going on, the town would gradually rise in installments from the floor and come in and get used to the news, an begin to remember things just like this that happened to it during the John Day excitement, or when it was prospecting on the Peccos, or raising prunes in the Big Bend, or in short practicing any of its several previous industries. Then the stage could drive up and the young man could get in and go away; and just as it was occurring to everybody that they would like to know his name and occupation, dark-eyed girl could break through and fling herself upon the corpse with cries of love and vengeance. Or, if you please, the proprietor could fly from the saloon calling 'murder!' and in two minutes we could have the doors barred and the young man standing a siege in the front room. Oh, yes, various sets of sequences might follow this beginning, and each of them be fair enough in the way of probability. But that is not the point."

Owen Wister analysis the "bad" man and his deeds, and he tries to explain "the reasons for his existence."

"What," he asks, "is the frontier but a modern moment of an earlier universal epoch—the way we all lived before each man had handed over his right and personal vengeance to the law, in exchange for legal protection?"

What is a policeman but our official deputy whose club relieves us from the necessity of using clubs ourselves? Take away the policeman, and we must all carry clubs again. Now when people left cities and went to live in the Rocky mountains, they could not pack the policeman with them, and so they had to take a club. You looked out for yourself; there was nobody else to do it for you. And soon, very soon, your primitive nature, that which the cradle of convention at best can never do more than lull into a sleep so light as to be scarcely deeper than a doze, waked up with something like a shout of joy. It was so good to take care of your possessions with your own arm and courage! To make a man perform his obligations to you by means of your leveled weapon, instead of by an action for breach of contract! It was so good to carry your life in your hand once more, instead of having it grow stale in the policeman's pocket! So you and your heart and your brain leaped straight from the 19th century back to the days of Charlemagne and the Paladins. They used spears, and you a revolver; but this was the only difference. It needed scarce one season to shake you out of your shell of civilization. You lived exercising your old right of personal vengeance; you had to—or vanish. You lived dealing justice without law; you had to—or vanish. Therefore you lived hand in hand with death, and your eye grew used to death, and your heart fearless of it; so that you held life only a means instead of an end, and you valued other things more, paying your life for them if necessary. And after living so then, to see a fence across the wilderness, to hear of law-suits, to feel civilization creeping westward on your heels was hateful, and savored of the prison."

This being thrust out on his own responsibility, this "taking the bride off and leaving poor human nature to keep the road by itself," is Owen Wister says, the reason for the "bad" man's existence. But with civilization he is dying out, being crowded to the wall, and he adds:

"If you would see the 'bad' man today, go to the Southwest. It is there he has most flourished and most survived. There you will find him lower and uglier in appearance than anything I have chosen to tell you. The Northwest has more nearly got him under. The climate and industries there invite more good citizens, and these have their way to a greater extent. The good citizens of Arizona and New Mexico do not have their own way much. Barefaced evil still triumphs there because those deserts favor birds of prey and drive honest men elsewhere. Moreover, Arizona and New Mexico have a special populace—the scum from California, Texas and old Mexico. With this, decency wages a one-sided battle. The tale of train robbery alone in Arizona and of jury acquittals in recent years when the robbers have been captured is a black

record. One would be neither astonished nor sorry to see vigilantes arise in Arizona and sweep clean the valleys of Sulphur Springs and San Simon." —Examiner.

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