



HELD BY THE ENEMY.

that yer couldn't see nothink 'cept them orful figgers a-glarin' at each other acrost the road.

"On he come, clatterty-bang, splashin' the mud ter right an' left, w'en all of a sudden he come plump on the imerges. Wuz he skeert? Well, no, I reckon not *very* pertukerlarly! The *hoss* wuz put out a trifle, but they didn't fizz on the Major. He jest pulled out a double-bar'led pistil an' fired a shot at each figger, knockin' four teeth out uv one an' six out uv the other, an' most effecherly squelchin' the lights in 'em. Then he druv his spurs in an' carmly an' permiscusly rode on. Solerm fact! I tell yer, we went back with our tails atween our legs, meterphorically speakin'.

"Well, ez this plot hed failed teetotally, we come ter the cornculcon that we'd hev ter perseed ter extremes, an' we did. The nex' time old Major Slasher come down he foun' the road blocked fer nigh on two mile. There wuz trees acrost it, boys, there wuz sentces acrost it, an' there wuz piles uv brush an' other mater'al acrost it. I tell yer it wuz a case uv block, an' it made us sweat ter do it. But it didn't stop the Major. He jumped acrost some, he clam'ered over others, an' scooted roun' the res', arrivin' safe at his destination. Then, ter make matters wuss, old Barnes wuz parthmaster, an' he hed us out bright an' airly on Monday mornin' ter clear the road ag'in. More'n that, he got the Major ter wait over, an' he wuz the fust through parsenger arter we'd fixed things. I tell yer, it par'lized us w'en he come along an' wished us a good mornin', his sharp gray eyes a-twinklin'. Barnes hed all he could do ter keep from burstin' right out.

"This brung matters ter a crissis, an' w'en we next perseeded ter the ronydovows we hed shot-guns in our han's an' fire in our eyes. We hed decided ter try onct more, an' ef we failed we wuz ter retire from the cornst. Conserquently, we meant bisness, an' no mistake. But yer must rekerlect that we wuzn't sich fools ez ter try the new game right off. We waited, I should reckon, 'bout three weeks afore we went in fer it. In fact, the Major hed come ter the cornculcon that we wuz retired from the perseshion, but he wuz mistaken.

"Yer see, our idear wuz ter surroun' the old man an' make him swar on the Bible that he'd retire from the scene an' give the boys a chance. Ef he failed ter do this we cornculced ter ride him on a rail up ter Barneses an' let him go.

"He hed his pistils with him all right, but we come out so suddent thet he wuz covered by our shootin'-irons an' on the groun' in half a minute. But ef we thort we hed him we wuz a leetle out, fur ez soon's he got his wits ag'in an' foun' himself on terry firma, he made a propersition thet completely took the wind out uv our sails. 'Gentlemen,' said he, 'I'm free ter acknowledge thet yer hev me this time. Ez things stan', yer kin murder me ef yer hev a min' ter do it, but I think yer are men enough ter listen ter a fair propersition. Now, gentlemen, I say right here thet I've got jest ez good a right ter court Miss Barnes, an' marry her ef I kin git her, ez any man on the groun', an' I won't go back on thet. Howsomdever, ef yer will just pick out yer man, whichever ye imagines hez the best show with the young lady, an' we'll fight it out right here. Ef he licks me I'll retire from the scene, an' ef I lick him I'm ter hev no more uv this oppersition. Come, gentlemen, make yer decision.'

"Leavin' the Major in charge uv three uv the boys, the res' uv us retired a bit an' corncidered the matter. Some wuz fer rejectin' the propersition, but the varst majority wuz in favor uv it ez the only honerable course ter pursue. So we decided thet ez Tom Blackburn hed the best countenance with the gal, he wuz ter toe the scratch an' settle things fer good. Tom wuzn't more'n five-an'-twenty, an', ez the Major wuz more'n double thet, we wuz conferdent Tom 'd come out best; more pertukerly ez he wuz mighty handy with his fists. Howsomdever, things don't allers come out jest ez yer expects 'em to, an' it's never best ter feel too sure uv anythin'.

"Well, boys, they stripped fur the combat, the res' uv us formin' a ring roun' 'em. They both meant bisness; there wuzn't no qualin' on either side. Tom hed the advantage in age an' size, bein' stouter than the Major, an' ez they squared off an' give us a chance ter study their physeek, we cornculced thet the battle woul'dn't larst long an' thet the Major wuz in fer it. Neither did it larst long, boys; not more'n fifteen minutes, I should consider, but it wuzn't the Major ez got licked, oh no! It wuz Tom. He hedn't the ghost uv a chance from the fust. It wuz nothin' but git up ter be knocked down ag'in. I never seen anythin' like it in my born days. The old man wuz quick ez lightnin' an' hit wusser than a mule. I tell yer Tom showed grit, and did all he could, but at the close the onfortnit critter's physerog wuz like one uv the *Globe's* old war maps. Ez fur the old man, he wuz a trifle blowed, but there wuzn't a scratch on him. A more kerflummixed crowd than we wuz 'd hev bin hard ter fin', ez we slowly an' sadly made fur home, a-carryin' Tom on a hand-barrer o' saplin's. The Major wuz unmorlested from thet time forrard, an' soon went to the alter with his young an' bloomin' bride."

PERKINS MIDDLEWICK.

#### EPIGRAMMATA.

THE Montreal bankers have combined to keep up the rate of discount.

"When banks combine to keep the rate  
Of discount high—a crisis  
Will soon proclaim the merchant's fate  
Unless he puts up prices!"

A British ship is not allowed to ascend the Yang-tse-Kiang.

Says Pig-tail to Jack, with a smile of great glee,  
"From the Yang-tse-Kiang you must speedily hop;  
And the reason is plain as a tea-cup to see,  
No Bulls are allowed in this old China shop."